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PLAUTUS AND TERENCE

BY THE

REV. W. LUCAS COLLINS, M.A.

AUTHOR OF

'ETONIANA,' 'THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS,' ETC.

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C O N T E N T S.

| CHAP. | PAGE |
|---|------|
| I. INTRODUCTORY—THE ANCIENT COMIC DRAMA, | 1 |
| II. MENANDER, | 6 |
| III. PLAUTUS, | 30 |
| IV. THE COMEDIES OF PLAUTUS :— | 35 |
| THE THREE SILVER PIECES—THE BRAGGADOCIO— THE HAUNTED HOUSE--THE SHIPWRECK—THE CAP- TIVES—THE TWO MENÆCHMI—AMPHITRYON—THE POT OF GOLD—THE TRICKSTER—THE YOUNG CAR- THAGINIAN—STICHUS, ETC. | |
| V. TERENCE, | 95 |
| VI. THE COMEDIES OF TERENCE :— | 100 |
| THE MAID OF ANDROS—THE MOTHER-IN-LAW—THE SELF-TORMENTOR --THE ETHIOPIAN SLAVE---PHOR- MIO—THE BROTHERS. | |

N O T E.

THESE pages are much indebted to M. Guizot's volume entitled 'Menandre ; Etude Historique, &c.' also to Mr Dunlop's 'History of Roman Literature.'

No attempt has been made to avoid roughness in the metre of the translations from Plautus and Terence ; they can hardly be, in this respect, more irregular than the originals.

W. L. C.

PLAUTUS AND TERENCE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY—THE ANCIENT COMIC DRAMA.

THE Comedies of Plautus and Terence are all that remains to us of the Roman Comic Drama. It is impossible to deal with the works of these writers, even in so slight a sketch as is contemplated in this volume, without some previous reference to the Greek originals from which they drew. For the Roman drama was, more than any other branch of Roman literature, an inheritance from Greece; one of those notes of intellectual sovereignty which that marvellous people impressed upon their conquerors. The plays which, during five hundred years, from the days of the Scipios to those of Diocletian, amused a Roman audience, had as little claim to be regarded as national productions as the last happy “adaptation” from the French which enjoys its brief run at an English theatre.

But when we speak of Greek Comedy in its relation to the Roman Drama, we must not form our idea of

Comedy from the plays of Aristophanes. It so happens that he stands before us moderns as the sole surviving representative, in anything like discernible shape, of the comic drama at Athens. But his brilliant burlesques, with their keen political satire, their wealth of allusion, their mad extravagance of wit pushed even to buffoonery, have not much more in common with the plays of Plautus and Terence than with our modern parlour comedy as we have it from Mr Robertson or Mr Byron.

It has been said, when we parted from Aristophanes in a former volume of this series, that the glories of the old Athenian comedy had departed even before the great master in that school had put his last piece upon the stage. The long War was over. The great game of political life no longer presented the same intense excitement for the players. Men's lives and thoughts had begun to run in a narrower channel. As a political engine, there was no longer scope or occasion for the comic drama. And again, it was no longer easy to provide that costly and elaborate spectacle,—the numerous Chorus, highly trained and magnificently costumed, the machinery, the decorations, and the music,—which had delighted the eyes of Athenian playgoers none the less because their intellect was keen enough to appreciate every witticism of the dialogue. It must be remembered that the expense of mounting a new play—and this must always have been considerable where the theatres were on such a vast scale—was not a matter of speculation for author or manager, as with us, but a public charge undertaken in turn by the richer citizens; and in which those who sought

popularity, in order to advance their own political claims, vied with each other in the liberality of their expenditure. But at the close of the Peloponnesian War, many a noble family found itself impoverished by the long and terrible struggle, and the competition for public office had probably lost much of its charm. The stage followed the temper of the nation : it became less violently political, less extravagant and more sedate. Shall one venture to say that, like the nation, it lost something of its spirit ? There was method, we must remember, in the mad licence of Aristophanes. Bitter as he was against his political opponents, it was an honest bitterness, and Cleon was his enemy because he believed him to be the enemy of the state. Socrates and Euripides were caricatured in the most unsparing fashion, for the amusement of the audience, and it was convenient for a professional jester to have two such well-known characters for his subject ; but he had always the apology that he really believed the teaching both of the philosopher and of the tragedian to have an evil influence upon public morality. There was a certain earnestness of purpose which gave respectability to the Aristophanic comedy in spite of its notorious offences against decency and good manners.

The new style of Comedy, which was the original of that of Plautus and Terence, and which developed in later times into what we call Comedy now, did not perhaps fully establish itself at Athens until nearly half a century after the death of Aristophanes. But the germ of it may be found in the later tragedies of Euripides. His heroes, and even his gods, are as unlike as possible to the stately figures who move in the dramas of

Æschylus. He may call them by what names he pleases, but they are the personages of ordinary life. His drunken Hercules, in his beautiful drama (tragedy it can hardly be called) ‘Alcestis,’ is as really comic as any character in Menander’s plays. His unsparing satirist Aristophanes, in his ‘Frogs,’ when he introduces Æschylus and Euripides pleading before Bacchus their respective claims to the chair of tragedy, makes it one of the charges against the latter that he had lowered the whole tone of tragedy : that whereas Æschylus had left the ideal men of the drama “grand figures, four cubits high,” his rival had reduced them to the petty level of everyday life—poor mean gossips of the market-place.* He allows Euripides indeed to plead in his defence that while the elder tragedian had given the audience nothing but high-flown sentiment and pompous language which was quite above their comprehension, he had brought before them subjects of common household interest which all could understand and sympathise with. Both accusation and defence were true. Euripides had violated the severe simplicity of classic tragedy : but he had founded the domestic drama.

The oligarchy of Rome would scarcely have permitted to the writers for the stage the licence of personal satire which the Athenian democracy not only bore with, but encouraged and delighted in. The risk which Aristophanes ran from the political partisans of Cleon would have been as nothing, compared with the perils of the comic dramatist who should have presumed to

* *Frogs*, 953, 910.

take the same liberty with any members of the “old great houses” of Rome. There had been at least one example of this in the fate of the poet Nævius. We know very little, unfortunately, of what his dramas may have been like, for in his case we have remaining to us only the merest fragments. But he seems to have made an attempt to naturalise at Rome the old Aristophanic style of comedy. A plebeian by birth, and probably a democratic reformer in politics, he had ventured upon some caricature of, or satire upon, the members of the great family who bore the name of Metellus, and who, as he complained, were always holding high office, fit or unfit. “It is fatality, not merit,” he said, in a verse which has been preserved, “that has made the Metelli always consuls of Rome.” The family or their friends retorted in a song which they chanted in the streets, the burden of which was, in effect, that “Nævius would find the Metelli a fatality to him.” They very soon got him imprisoned, under the stringent libel laws of Rome: and,—since that was not enough to break his spirit—for he is said, after his release, to have written comedies which were equally distasteful in high quarters,—they succeeded at last in driving him into banishment. We hear of no more ambition on the part of Roman dramatists to assume the mantle of Aristophanes. They were content to be disciples in the later school of Menander, and to take as the subject of comedy those general types of human nature under which no individual, high or low, was obliged to think that his own private weaknesses were attacked.

CHAPTER II.

MENANDER.

MENANDER was born at Athens, b.c. 342, of a family in which dramatic talent was in some degree hereditary, for his uncle Alexis had written comedies of some repute. It would appear that the faculties which make the successful comic writer commonly develop themselves at an early age ; for Menander, like his predecessor Aristophanes, won his first prize for comedy when he had barely reached manhood : and the same may be remarked as to the early and rapid success of some of our modern humorists.* But this youthful triumph was not followed, as might have been ex-

* Of course he did not escape the charge of presumption and precocity from older candidates. He had to defend himself on this occasion, like Pitt, from “the atrocious crime of being a young man.” His defence, if we may trust the anecdote, was by a parable. He brought upon the stage some new-born puppies, and had them thrown into a vessel of water. Blind and weak as they were, they instinctively tried to swim. “Athenians,” said the young author, “you ask how, at my years, I can have the knowledge of life which is required in the dramatist : I ask you, under what master and in what school did these creatures learn to swim ?”

pected, by many such victories. He wrote more than a hundred comedies, and he only won the crown eight times. He was beaten in the contest, again and again, by his elder rival Philemon. Of this writer's plays nothing but the merest fragments remain to us, and we are thus unable to form any opinion as to the justice of the popular verdict. But critics who probably had the means of comparing the performances of both authors, do not hesitate to impute this preference of Philemon^{*} to Menander by the contemporary public to other causes than the comparative merits of the rivals. Quintilian goes so far as to say that the wonderful genius of Menander robbed all his contemporary dramatists of what might have been their reputation, and that “the blaze of his glory threw their merits into the shade.”

The honours which were refused to the poet by his fellow-citizens were liberally offered him by powerful patrons elsewhere. Demetrius “Poliorcetes” both protected him when he occupied Athens and invited him to his court when he had seated himself upon the throne of Macedonia: and Ptolemy Lagus, when he founded his celebrated library at Alexandria, would gladly have imported the living dramatist as well as the manuscripts of his predecessors' works. Menander refused the invitation, though the king offered him “all the money in the world;” but whether it was, as he declared, because he could not tear himself from a certain fair lady at Athens, or because he found that the invitation had been extended to his rival Philemon, may not be so certain.

But it is said that the injustice of his fellow-citizens

broke the poet's heart. In his bitter mortification at one undeserved defeat (so goes the story) he threw himself into the sea off the wall at the Piræus, and was drowned, while yet in the fulness of his powers—not much over fifty years of age. The authority is suspicious, and the act is very little in accordance with the philosophy of Menander, as we gather it from the remains of his plays. A contemporary and probably a personal friend of Epicurus (they were born in the same year), he seems to have adopted heartily the easy-going optimism of that much-abused teacher. To take human life as it was; to enjoy its pleasures, and to bear its evils cheerfully, as unavoidable: not to expect too much from others, as knowing one's own infirmities; to remember that life is short, and therefore to make the most of it and the best of it, not to waste it in vain regrets;—this is the philosophy of Menander's comedies, which on these points are occasionally only too didactic. The whole secret of it lies, he says, in three words—"Thou art man."

"The sum of all philosophy is this—

Thou art a man; than whom there breathes no creature
More liable to sudden rise and fall."*

This is the principle on which, by the mouth of his various characters, he is continually excusing human weaknesses, and protesting against the unreasonableness of mortal regrets and expectations:—

"Being a mortal, ask not of the gods
Escape from suffering; ask but to endure;
For if thou seekest to be ever free

* Meineke, *Menandri Reliq.*, 188.

From pain and evil, then thou seekest this,—
To be a god, or die.”*

One does not wonder that Horace, when he shut himself up in his country villa in December, to escape from the noisy riot of the Saturnalia at Rome, took with him into his retirement a copy of Menander as well as of Plato. No doubt he read and appreciated the philosopher; and the manuscript looked well upon his table when his friends called. But we may be sure that the dramatist was his favourite companion. In him Horace found a thoroughly congenial spirit; and we shall probably never know how far he was indebted to him for his turn of thought.

Menander's private habits seem to have been too much those of an Epicurean in the lower sense of the term; and if Phædrus is to be trusted in the sketch which he gives of him in a couple of lines, he had a good deal of the foppishness not uncommon to popular authors. Phædrus describes him as “scented with delicate perfumes, wearing the fashionable flowing dress, and walking with an air of languor and affectation.”†

It is possible, indeed, that the philosophic and didactic character of Menander's comedies may have been one reason why they failed so often to win popular applause. Horace himself must have been the poet of the court, and of what we call “Society,” rather than of the million. The comedy of manners, which deals with the problems of domestic life—and such is the comedy of Menander—had not so strong an attraction

* Meineke, Menand. Rel., 203.

+ Fabul., v. 1.

for the multitude as the uproarious farce which formed so large an ingredient of the Old Comedy. So far as we can judge from the mere disjointed fragments which alone have survived, there was very little of broad fun or of comic situations in the plays of Menander. It was in the finer delineation of character, as is admitted by all his critics, that he most excelled. He had studied carefully, and reproduced successfully, the various phases of that human nature which was the Alpha and Omega in his philosophy. The saying of the wise man of old—"Know thyself"—was a very insufficient lesson, he considered, for the dramatist.

"It was not, after all, so wisely said,
That precept—'Know thyself'; I reckon it
Of more advantage to know other men."*

How real the characters in his dramas appeared to those who had the best means of judging may be gathered from the terse epigram ascribed to the grammarian Aristophanes, the librarian of Alexandria, who lived about a century after him:—

"O Life, and O Menander ! speak, and say
Which copied which ? or nature, or the play ?"

There certainly does not seem to have been that variety in the characters introduced which we expect and find in the modern drama. But life itself had not then the variety of interest which it has now : and the sameness of type which we observe in the persons of the drama probably existed also in society. It must be re-

* Meineke, Menand. Rel., 83.

membered also that, owing to the immense size of the theatres, every performer wore a mask in which the features were exaggerated, just as he wore buskins which increased his stature, in order to make his face and figure distinctly visible to the distant rows of the audience. These masks necessarily presented one fixed expression of features ; they could not possibly be made to display the variable shades of emotion which a real comedian knows how to throw into his face ; nor could the actor, if he was to preserve his identity for the audience, change his mask together with his mood from scene to scene. This difficulty would naturally limit the dramatic author's sphere of invention : he would feel that he had to confine himself to certain recognised generalities of character, such as the mask-moulder could contrive more or less to represent, and that the finer shades of distinction which, in spite of so much that is identical, distinguish man from man, must be left for the descriptive poet, and were outside of the province of the author who worked for the stage. The cold severity of Greek tragedy did not suffer much from this limitation of the actor's resources : the level and stately declamation of the text might be accomplished perhaps as well with a mask (which was even said to increase the volume of sound) as without it. So also, in the Old Comedy of Aristophanes and his contemporaries, the exaggerated style of their humour found apt expression in the broad grotesque which the mask-maker and property-man supplied,—just as they do now in our burlesques and extravaganzas. The delicate play of features and expression which are so essential to the due impersonation of some of the

most original characters in our modern drama was plainly impossible to an actor who wore a mask : one might as reasonably look for it from a company of Marionettes. The manufacturer of masks for the ancient comic drama worked according to fixed rules, which were perfectly well understood both by the performers and by the audience. There was a tolerably large repertory of these contrivances always at the disposal of the stage-manager : but each mask had its own specific character ; its features were so moulded as to be typical of a class. We are told with great particularity that about the period during which these comedies were placed upon the stage, there were nine different characters of masks representing old men, ten for younger characters, and seven for slaves. For the women, three varieties were considered enough for the older personages, the matrons and nurses of the scene. The young ladies, as was their due, were better provided for ; no less than fourteen varieties of face were kept in stock for them. And the mask, in their case—unlike some masks which are still worn on the stage of real life—was made not to conceal but to indicate the character of the wearer, and even her age. There was to be found, in the theatrical wardrobe, the face and head-dress, all in one, which denoted “the talkative young woman,” and the “modest young woman ;” the one who was still fairly on her promotion, and the one who was past her prime ; there was a special mask for the young lady “with the hair,” and one still more peculiar, the “lamp” head-dress, as it was called, for the young lady whose hair stood upright like a lamp. There was the head-dress “with

the gold band," and that with "the band of many colours;" and, if we did not know that in the classical comedy, as on our own stage in former times, even the female parts were taken by men, we might have fancied that there was some jealous rivalry as to the right to wear these latter distinguished costumes. The advantage of the system, if any, was this: that the moment the performer appeared upon the scene, the audience had the key to the character.*

The range of characters which were available for the purposes of the dramatist was limited again by the nature of the scenic arrangements. By long theatrical tradition, intelligible enough amongst a people who led essentially an outdoor life, and where the theatre itself was, up to a comparatively late period, open to the sky, all the action of these dramas was supposed to take place in the open air. In the comedies which we are now considering, the scene is commonly a public street,—or rather, probably, a sort of "place" or square in which three or four streets met, so that there was (as has been more than once attempted on the modern stage) a virtual separation of it into distinct parts, very convenient in many ways for carrying on the action

* Should any English reader be inclined to smile, with some degree of superciliousness, at these simple contrivances of the earlier drama, let him remember there was a time when a provincial actor in an English strolling company would borrow of some good-natured squire a full-bottomed wig and lace ruffles in which to perform the part of—Cato; without which conventional costume it was thought no audience could recognise the "noble Roman." George Harding tells us an amusing story of the Eton amateurs of his day impressing a cast-off wig of the Vice-Provost's for the purpose.

of the piece. A party coming down one street towards the centre of the stage could hold a separate conversation, and be quite out of the sight of another party in the other street, while both were equally visible and audible to the spectators. This will help to explain the stage directions in more than one scene in the comedies of Plautus and Terence. But this limitation of the locality of the scene limited also the range of characters. These were usually supposed to be residents in the neighbourhood, and occupants of some of the houses in the street. Practically, they will be very often found to be members of two neighbouring families, more or less closely connected, whose houses occupied what we should now call the right and left wings of the stage. Occasionally (as in the 'Aulularia' and 'Mostellaria' of Plautus) the scene changes to the inside of one of the houses, or a temple which stands close by ; but such scenes are quite exceptional, and in those cases some kind of stage chamber appears to have been swung round by machinery to the front.

For these reasons, perhaps, as well as for others, the principal characters in the repertory of the "New" Comedy are few, and broadly marked. They seem to have occurred over and over again with but little variation in almost every piece. There are the fathers, heads of families, well-to-do burghers, occupying their house in the city, and commonly having a farm in the adjacent country besides, but seldom appearing to have any other particular occupation. Their character is almost always one of two recognised types,—either stern and niggardly, in which case they are duly cheated and baffled by their spend-

thrift sons and their accomplices : or mild and easy, when they go through the process of having their purses squeezed with less resistance and less suffering. There is the respectable mother of the family, who is sometimes the terror of her husband and sometimes tyrannised over by him. One or two sons, and sometimes a daughter—to which number the household of comedy seems limited—make up the family group. The sons are young men about town, having apparently nothing to do but to amuse themselves, a pursuit which they do not always follow after the most reputable fashion. Then there are the slaves, on whom depends in very great measure the action of the piece. It is very remarkable how in Greek comedy, and in the Roman adaptations from it, this class supplies not only the broadly comic element, but the wit of the dialogue, and the fertility of expedient which makes the interest of the drama. They are not brought upon the stage merely to amuse us by their successful roguery, or by its detection and consequent punishment, by their propensity to gormandise and their drunken antics,—this kind of “low comedy business” is what we might naturally expect of them. But in witty repartee, and often in practical wisdom, they are represented as far superior to their masters. And this ability of character is quite recognised by the masters themselves. They are intrusted, like Parmeno in the ‘Eunuchus’ of Terence, with the care of the sons of the house, even at that difficult age when they are growing up to manhood, during the father’s absence abroad : or like his namesake in the ‘Plocium’ of Menander, and Geta in the ‘Two Brothers’ of Terence,

they are the trusted friend and mainstay of a struggling family. It is by no means easy to explain satisfactorily this anomalous position. The slave no doubt in many cases, owing the loss of his personal liberty to the fortunes of war, being either a captive or a captive's child, might, although a foreigner, be of as good birth and hereditary intellect as his master. In many households he would go to the same school, and enjoy the same training in many ways as the young heir of the family : he would be taught many accomplishments, because the more accomplished he was, the more valuable a chattel he became. But was it also that these Athenian citizens, from whom Menander drew, held themselves somewhat above the common practical business of life—in short, like the Easterns in the matter of dancing, considered that they “paid some one else to do their thinking for them” in such matters? The witty slave occupied a position in those households somewhat akin to the king’s jester in late times—allowed to use a freedom which would not have been suffered from those of higher rank, but limited always by the risk of condign personal chastisement if he ventured too far. The household slave was certainly admitted to most of his master’s secrets ; admitted, it must be remembered, almost of necessity, as many of our own modern servants are—a condition of things which we are all too apt to forget. He might at any moment by his ability and fidelity win, as so many did, his personal freedom, and became from that moment his master’s friend ; not, indeed, upon terms of perfect equality, but on a much nearer level than we in these days should be willing

to allow. No stronger instance of this need be sought than that of Cicero's freedman Tiro, between whom and his master we find existing an affection almost fraternal. The slave who had gained his freedom might rise—for it was Terence's own case—to be a successful dramatist himself, and to sit down at table with such men as Scipio and Lælius. The anomaly is that a man who stood in such confidential relations to his master, and with such possibilities in his future, should feel himself every moment liable, at that master's slightest caprice, to the stocks and the whip. But it is an anomaly inherent to the institution of slavery itself; and no worse examples of it need be sought than are to be found in the annals of modern slave plantations.

In the few fragments of Menander which remain to us we find the poet adopting, as to the slave's position, a much higher tone than we might have expected, and which is very remarkable in a writer who would certainly never have dreamed of the abolition of a system which must have appeared to him a necessity of civilisation. It is a tone, be it said, which we do not find in his Roman imitators, Plautus or Terence. He plainly feels slavery to be an evil—a degradation to the nature of man. His remedy is a lofty one—freedom of soul :—

“Live as a free man—and it makes thee free.” *

The young men are, as has been said, usually very much of the same type, and that not a very high one: hot-blooded and impulsive, with plenty of selfish good-nature, and in some cases a capacity for

* Meineke, Menand. Rel., 269.

strong and disinterested friendship. We have too little opportunity of judging what Menander made of them ; but in Terence they have commonly the redeeming point of a strong affection for their parents underlying all their faults, though it does not prevent them from intriguing with their slaves to cheat them in order to the gratification of their own passions or extravagance. Yet their genuine repentance when detected, and the docility with which they usually accept their father's arrangements for them in the matter of a wife, are a remarkable proof of the strength of the paternal influence. The daughter of the family may be said (in quite a literal sense) to have no character at all. She is brought up in something stricter than even what Dryden calls “the old Elizabeth way, which was for maids to be seen and not heard ;” for she is never seen or heard, though we are always led to believe that she is an irreproachable young lady, possessing a due amount of personal charms, and with a comfortable dowry ; which combined attractions are quite sufficient to make one of the young gentlemen happy—sometimes at very short notice—in the last scene of the play. But it was not etiquette for an unmarried woman at Athens to make her appearance in the public streets—and in the streets, for the reasons already given, the action of the piece invariably takes place. Of some of the ladies who do appear on the stage the same remark as to character (in a different sense) might be made ; and if something less were seen and heard of them, it might be better.

This entire absence of what we should call love-scenes, places these dramas at an enormous disadvantage

before the modern reader. Yet in one direction, a great approach to modern ways of thought had been made in this New Athenian Comedy. Love, with the dramatists of this school, is no longer the mere animal passion of some of the older poets, nor yet that fatal and irresistible influence which we see overpowering mind and reason in the *Medea* of Euripides, or in the *Dido* of Virgil. It has become, in Menander and his followers, much more like the love of modern romance. It is a genuine mutual affection between the sexes, not always well regulated, but often full of tenderness, and capable of great constancy. Still, the modern romance is not there. It was very well for ancient critics to say that Menander was emphatically a writer of love-dramas—that there was no play of his which had not a love-story in the plot: and it is true, if we may judge from the Latin adaptations, that his comedies usually ended in marriage. But a marriage with a bride whom the audience have never been allowed to see, and for whose charms they must take the bridegroom's word, has not a very vivid interest for them. The contrivances by which, in order to suit what were then considered the proprieties, the fair object is kept carefully out of sight while the interest in her fortunes is still kept up, will seem to an English reader a striking instance of misplaced ingenuity.

If, however, in these comedies of ancient domestic life we miss that romance of feeling which forms so important an element—if it may not rather be said to be of the very essence—of the modern drama, we escape altogether from one style of plot which was not only the reproach of our old English comedy-writers, but is still

too common a resource with modern writers of fiction, romantic or dramatic. The sanctities of married life are not tampered with to create a morbid interest for audience or reader. The husband may sometimes be a domestic tyrant, or his wife a scold, and their matrimonial wrangles are not unfrequently produced for the amusement of the audience ; but there is little hint of any business for the divorce court. The morality of these comedies is lax in many respects, chiefly because the whole law of morality was lower on those points (at least in theory) in the pagan world than it is in the Christian : but the tie of fidelity between husband and wife is fully recognised and regarded. In this respect some advance had been made, at least so far as popular comedy was concerned, since the time of Aristophanes. His whole tone on such points is cynical and sneering ; and when he lashes as he does with such out-spoken severity the vices of the sex, it seems to be without any consciousness of their bearing upon domestic happiness. The wife, in his days at least, was not the companion of her husband, but a property to be kept as safe as might be, and their real lives lay apart. Some considerable change must have taken place in these relations at the time when Menander wrote, if we may judge from scattered expressions in his lost comedies. He is not, upon the whole, complimentary to marriage, and he makes capital enough out of its risks and annoyances ; he does not think (or perhaps professes not to think) that good wives are common.

“ Needs must that in a wife we gain an evil,—
Happy is he who therein gains the least.”*

* Meineke, Menand. Rel., 190.

But, if a really good wife can be found, he admits with the wise Hebrew king that “her price is above rubies.” Verses like the following, salvage from the wreck of his plays, passed into proverbs :—

“A virtuous woman is a man’s salvation.”

“A good wife is the rudder of the house.”

He is honest enough, too, to lay the fault of ill-assorted marriages at the door of those who have to choose in such a matter, as much as of those who are chosen ; in this, as in other things, he recognises a certain law of supply and demand.

“What boots it to be curious as to lineage—

Who was her grandfather, and her mother’s mother—

Which matters nought ? while, for the bride herself,

Her whom we have to live with,—what she is,

In mind and temper, this we never ask.

They bring the dowry out, and count it down,

Look if the gold be good, of right assay,—

The gold, which some few months shall see the end of ;

While she who at our hearth must sit through life,

We make no trial of, put to no proof,

Before we take her, but trust all to chance.”*

The gibes which he launches against women seem to have been not more than half in earnest. He probably borrowed the tone from Euripides, of whom he was a great admirer, and whose influence may be pretty clearly traced in the style and sentiment of his comedies.

We usually find, then, the chief parts in the comedy filled by the members of one or two neighbouring

* Meineke, Menand. Rel., 189.

families. Of the other characters who are introduced, two of the most common, and therefore, we must suppose, the most popular, are the Braggadocio and the Parasite. The former is usually a soldier of fortune who has served in the partisan wars in Asia, under some of those who were disputing for the fragments of Alexander's empire ; who has made money there, and come to Athens—as a modern successful adventurer might go to Paris—to spend it. He has long stories to tell of his remarkable exploits abroad, which no one is very well able to contradict, and to which those who accept his dinners are obliged to listen with such patience as they may. His bravery consists much more in words than deeds : he thinks that his reputation will win him great favour from the ladies, but on this point he commonly finds himself very much mistaken. How far such a character was common at Athens in Menander's time, we cannot say : he appears, with variations, in at least five of his comedies of which fragments have reached us, and in no less than eight out of the twenty which remain to us of Plautus. He would evidently present salient points for the farce-writer, and it is not surprising to find him reproduced, no doubt an adaptation from these earlier sketches, as the "Spanish Captain" of Italian comedy, or the "Derby Captain" of our own. He is the Don Gaspard of Scarron's 'Jodelet Duelliste,' Le Capitaine Matamore of Corneille's 'L'Illusion Comique,' and the Bobadil of Jonson's 'Every Man in his Humour.' In Spain or Italy he is perhaps more in his natural place—for these military adventurers were not uncommon in the Continental wars of the fifteenth and sixteenth cen-

turies—than he is in the plays of Plautus or of Terence, who transferred him bodily from their Greek original : for the Romans themselves were not likely to furnish examples of him, and no hired mercenary would have ventured to swagger in those days at Rome. To a Roman audience this could only have been one of those conventional characters, made to be laughed at, which an easy public is very often willing to accept from an author's hands. He is sometimes accompanied by the Parasite, who is content to eat his dinners on condition of listening to his military reminiscences, and occasionally drawing them out for the benefit of others,—acting, in short, generally as his humble foil and toady. This is a character almost peculiar to the comedy of this school, and which has not found its way much into the modern drama. In the Athens of Menander, and in the Rome of Plautus and Terence, when life was altogether more in public, and when men of any moderate position seldom dined alone, the character, though not in the exaggerated form which suited the purpose of the comic dramatist, appears to have been sufficiently common. Athenaeus, from whose curious ‘Table-Talk’ we learn so much about the social life of those times, notes three distinct classes of the Parasite. There was the professed talker—the narrator of anecdotes and sayer of good things—who was invited to “make sport” for the guests who might be too grand or too dull to amuse each other ; and this useful class of “diner-out” is not altogether unknown in modern society. This variety of the character seems to have not unfrequently “read up” carefully in preparation for the display of the evening, as modern

professors of the art of conversation have been reported to do. "I will go in and have a look at my commonplace-books, and learn up some better jokes," says Gelasimus in the 'Stichus' of Plautus, when he is afraid of being superseded by some new pretenders. There was, again, the mere toady and flatterer, of whom we shall see a specimen presently in one of the fragments of Menander, as well as in the comedies of Plautus; * and of whom we have some historical examples fully as ludicrous as any inventions of the stage, if the biographers of Philip and Alexander of Macedon are to be trusted. We are told, that whenever King Philip ate anything sour or acid, and made wry faces at it, his flatterer Cleisophos went through exactly the same grimaces; when the king hurt his leg, Cleisophos immediately put on a limp; and when the king lost his right eye by the arrow at Methone, the courtier appeared next morning with the same eye bandaged up. It is also said that to wear the head a little on one side became quite the fashion in the court of Alexander, because he himself had a slight deformity of the kind. Another variety of the parasite was the still meaner humble companion, who carried messages and did little services of all kinds, sometimes worse than menial, for his richer patron.

An amusing soliloquy of one of these hungry guests who is waiting for his dinner (having possibly found no entertainer, and therefore no dinner at all, the day before) has been preserved for us by Aulus Gellius out of a lost comedy which he attributes to Plautus,—

* See p. 44.

'The Boeotian,'—founded upon one of the same name by Menander:—

"The gods confound the man who first invented
 This measuring time by hours ! Confound him, too,
 Who first set up a sun-dial—chopping up
 My day into these miserable slices !
 When I was young, I had no dial but appetite,
 The very best and truest of all timepieces ;
 When that said 'Eat,' I ate—if I could get it.
 But now, even when I've the chance to eat, I must not,
 Unless the sun be willing ! for the town
 Is grown so full of those same cursed dials,
 That more than half the population starve." *

These persons are represented, of course, as having not only the habit of living as far as possible at other men's expense, but as bringing an insatiable appetite with them to their entertainers' tables—

"'Tis not to gather strength he eats, but wishes
 To gather strength that he may eat the more." +

Neither host nor servants are sparing in their gibes as to the gormandising propensities of this class of self-invited guests. The cook in 'The Menæchmi' of Plautus is ordered to provide breakfast for three :—

Cook. What sort of three ?

Erotium. Myself, Menæchmus, and his Parasite.

Cook. Then that makes ten. I count the parasite
 As good as any eight.

Although the character of the Parasite is a direct importation from the Greek stage, it was likely to be a very common one also in Roman society. The rela-

* Aul. Gell., iii. 3.

+ Fragment of Plautus.

tion of patron and client, which meets us everywhere in the Roman city life of those days—when the great man was surrounded with his crowds of hangers-on, all more or less dependent upon and obsequious to him, and often eating at his table—was sure to breed in plenty that kind of human fungus.

Among the remaining characters common to this Menandrian Comedy we meet with the waiting-maid, more or less pert and forward—who, although a slave, seems to have had considerable liberty of tongue, and who maintains her ground upon the modern stage with little more change in the type than has followed necessarily with the changes of society. There is, again, the family nurse, garrulous but faithful ; and sometimes we have another of the household in the person of the family cook. Lastly, there is the hateful slave-merchant, the most repulsive character in the Greek and Roman drama, and upon whose ways and doings there is no need for us here to dwell.

The philosophy of Menander has been spoken of as distinctly of an Epicurean character, and his morality is certainly no whit higher than that of his age and times. Yet fragments of his have escaped the general wreck, which have in them a grave melancholy not usually associated in our ideas with the teaching of that school, and which have led a modern scholar, than whom no one understood more thoroughly the spirit of Greek literature, to remark that Menander after all seems to have been “more adapted to instruct than to entertain.”* Such a fragment is the following :—

* Walter Savage Landor.

“ If thou wouldest know thyself, and what thou art,
 Look on the sepulchres as thou dost pass ;
 There lie within the bones and little dust
 Of mighty kings and wisest men of old ;
 They who once prided them on birth or wealth,
 Or glory of great deeds, or beauteous form ;
 Yet nought of these might stay the hand of Time.
 Look,—and bethink thee thou art even as they.”*

We find also passages quoted as his, though their genuineness is somewhat doubtful, which breathe a higher tone still. The sentiment expressed in the following lines, attributed to the poet by Clement of Alexandria, is almost identical with that of the grand passage with which Persius concludes his second Satire :—

“ Trust me, my Pamphilus, if any think
 By offering hecatombs of bulls or goats,
 Or any other creature,—or with vests
 Of cloth of gold or purple making brave
 Their images, or with sheen of ivory,
 Or graven jewels wrought with cunning hand,—
 So to make Heaven well-pleased with him, he errs,
 And hath a foolish heart. The gods have need
 That man be good unto his fellow-men,
 No unclean liver or adulterer,
 Nor thief nor murderer from the lust of gain,
 Nay, covet not so much as a needle’s thread,
 For One stands by, who sees and watches all.”†

The same writer has quoted another line as from the Greek dramatist, referring to the purification required

* Menand. Rel., 196.

† Clem. Alex. Strom., v. c. 14.

of the worshipper of the gods, which is a close parallel to the Christian teaching:—

“ He is well cleansed that hath his conscience clean.”

Another father of the Church has cited a terse apophthegm, which he attributes to Menander, as an argument to show the folly of idolatry:—

“ The workman still is greater than his work.” *

We owe the loss of Menander’s plays most probably to the fierce crusade made by the authorities of the early Church against this kind of heathen literature. Yet it is plain that this feeling was not shared by the ecclesiastical writers who have been quoted; and it is singular that we have one sentence of his embalmed in the writings of a still higher authority—St Paul:

“ Evil communications corrupt good manners.”

A manuscript of some at least of these comedies was said to have been long preserved in the library of the Patriarch at Constantinople, but it seems to have escaped the search of modern scholars, and has probably in some way disappeared.†

How great the loss has been to the literary world cannot be measured, though something may be guessed. It may be said of him as was said of our own Jeremy Taylor—“ His very dust is gold.” The number of single verses and distiches caught up from his plays which passed into household proverbs show how widely his writings must have leavened the literary

* Justin Mart., Apol. i. 20.

† See Journ. of Educ., i. 138.

taste both of Athenians and Romans. The estimation in which he was held by those who had access to his works in their integrity is fully justified by what we can trace of his remains. "To judge of Menander from Terence and Plautus is easy but dangerous," says M. Guizot; dangerous, because we cannot tell how much he may have lost in the process of adaptation to the Roman stage. Cæsar has been thought to have spoken slightlying of Terence when he called him "a half-Menander;" but the Roman poet in all likelihood bore no such proportion to his great original.

CHAPTER III.

PLAUTUS.

ALL the writers of Comedy for the Roman stage, of whose works we have any knowledge, were direct imitators of Menander and his school. Plautus, however, was probably less indebted to him than were his successors, Cæcilius, Lavinius, and Terence. Of the two intermediate authors we know very little ; but Plautus and Terence have been more fortunate in securing for themselves a modern audience. Their comedies may not have been really better worth possessing than those of other writers who had their day of popularity : but theirs alone have been preserved, and it is from them that we have to form our judgment of the Comedy of Republican Rome.

Titus Maccius Plautus—the second would be what we should call his surname, and the last simply means “flat-foot”* in the dialect of Umbria, the district in

* Literary tradition in some quarters asserted that in one of his comedies he introduced a sketch—certainly not too flattering —of his own personal appearance :

“ A red-haired man, with round protuberant belly,
Legs with stout calves, and of a swart complexion :
Large head, keen eyes, red face, and monstrous feet.”

—Pseudolus, act iv. sc. 7.

which he was born,—was a man of humble origin, the son, according to some authorities, of a slave. But little is known with any certainty on these points. He is said to have made money in trade, and to have lost it again ; to have then worked as a stage carpenter or machinist, and so perhaps to have acquired his theatrical taste. These early associations are taken also, by some critics, as an explanation of some rudeness and coarseness in his plays ; for which, however, the popular taste is quite as likely to have been accountable as any peculiar tendencies of the writer. Like that marvel of dramatic prolificness, Lope de Vega, who quotes him as an apology, Plautus wrote for the people, and might have pleaded, as the Spaniard did, that “it was only fair that the customers should be served with what suited their taste.” The masses who thronged the Roman theatres had not the fine intellect of the Commons of Athens. Aristophanes could never have depended upon them for due appreciation of his double-edged jests, or appealed to them as critical judges of humour. The less keen but more polished dialogue and didactic moralising of Menander would have been still less attractive to such an audience as that to which Plautus had to look for favour. The games of the circus —the wild-beast fight and the gladiators, the rope-dancers, the merry-andrews, and the posture-masters,—were more to their taste than clever intrigue and brilliant dialogue.

Plautus—we know him now only by his *sobriquet*—began his career as a dramatist B.C. 224. He continued to write for the stage, almost without a rival in popularity, until his death, forty years later. How many

comedies he produced during this long service of the public we do not know : twenty remain bearing his name, all which are considered to be genuine. All, with the exception probably of 'Amphytrion,' are taken from Greek originals. It is not necessary here to give a list of their titles ; the most interesting of them will be noticed in their order. With Greek characters, Greek names, and Greek scenery, he gives us undoubtedly the Roman manners of his day, which are illustrated more fully in his pages than in those of the more refined Terence. Let the scene of the drama lie where it will, we are in the streets of Rome all the while. Athenians, Thebans, or Ephesians, his *dramatis personæ* are all of one country, just as they speak one language ; they are no more real Greeks than Shakespeare's Othello is a Moor, or his Proteus a "gentleman of Verona"—except in the bill of the play. So little attempt does he make to keep up anything like an illusion on this point, that he even speaks of "triumvirs" at Thebes, builds a "Capitol" at Epidaurus, and makes his characters talk about "living like those Greeks," and "drinking like Greeks," utterly careless of the fact that they are supposed to be Greeks themselves. He is as independent of such historical and geographical trifles as our own great dramatist when he makes Hector quote Aristotle, or gives a sea-coast to Bohemia. But he has the justification which all great dramatists would fairly plead ; that his characters, though distinctly national in colour, are in a wider sense citizens of the world ; they speak, in whatever language, the sentiments of civilised mankind.

However coarse in many respects the matter and

style of Plautus may appear to us, it is certain that good judges amongst those who were more nearly his contemporaries thought very highly of his diction. It was said of him by *Ælius Stolo* that “if the Muses ever spoke Latin, it would be the Latin of Plautus.” Perhaps he was the first who raised conversational Latin to the dignity of a literary style.

His plays are in most cases introduced by a prologue, spoken sometimes by one of the characters in the play, and sometimes by a mythological personage, such as Silenus or Arcturus. The prologue generally gives an outline of the plot, and this has been objected to by some critics as destroying the interest of the action which is to follow. But a similar practice has been adopted of late years in our own theatres, of giving the audience, in the play-bill, a sketch of the leading scenes and incidents; and this is generally found to increase the intelligent enjoyment of the play itself. The prologues of Plautus frequently also contain familiar appeals on the part of the manager to the audience, and give us a good deal of information as to the materials of which the audience was composed. The mothers are requested to leave their babies at home, for the babies' sakes as well as for the sake of other people; and the children who are in the theatre are begged not to make a noise. The slaves are desired not to occupy the seats, which are not intended for them, but to be content with standing-room; protests are made against the system of *claqueurs*,—friends of some favourite actor, who gave their applause unfairly, to the discredit of others: and the wives are requested not to interrupt the performance with their chatter, and so annoy their

husbands who are come to see the play. Remarks of this kind, addressed to the “house,” are not confined, however, to the prologue, but occur here and there in the scene itself; these last are evident relics of the earlier days of comedy, for we find no such in the plays of Terence.

CHAPTER IV.

THE COMEDIES OF PLAUTUS.

1. THE THREE SILVER PIECES.

THE plot of this little comedy, which is confessedly borrowed from the Greek of Philemon, and is called in the original with perhaps more propriety “The Buried Treasure,” is simple enough. Charmides, a rich citizen of Athens, has been half ruined by an extravagant son. He goes abroad, leaving this son and a daughter in charge of his old friend Callicles, begging him to do what he can to keep young Lesbonicus from squandering the little that is left of the family property. At the same time, he intrusts his friend with a secret. He has buried under his house a treasure—three thousand gold Philips.* This, even if things come to the worst, will serve to provide a marriage portion for his daughter, in the event of his not living to return to Athens. Callicles has striven in vain to persuade the young man to mend his ways ; Lesbonicus has gone on in the same course of extravagance, until he has nothing left but a

* Gold coins struck by the Macedonian kings, and worth about two guineas apiece.

small farm outside the city, and the house in which he lives—and where the treasure is buried. This house at last he offers for sale : and Calicles is only just in time to buy it in for himself, and so to preserve for his absent friend the precious deposit.

The action of the piece is introduced by a short allegorical ‘Prologue,’ in which Luxury introduces her daughter Poverty into the house of the prodigal, and bids her take possession : a very direct mode of enforcing its moral upon the audience. This moral, however, is by no means carried out with the same distinctness in the catastrophe.

So much of the story is told at the opening of the play by Calicles to a friend, who seems to have called purposely to tell him some disagreeable truths—as is the recognised duty of a friend. People are talking unpleasantly about his conduct: they say that he has been winking at the young man’s extravagance, and has now made a good thing of it by buying at a low price the house which he is obliged to sell. Calicles listens with some annoyance, but at first with an obstinate philosophy. Can he do nothing, his friend asks, to put a stop to these evil rumours ?

I can,—and I can not ; 'tis even so ;
As to their saying it,—that I cannot help ;
I can take care they have no cause to say it.

But, on his old friend pressing him, he yields so far as to intrust him with the whole secret.

A suitor now appears for the hand of the young daughter of the absent Charmides. It is Lysiteles, a young man of great wealth and noble character, the

darling of an indulgent father, who consents, though with some natural unwillingness, not only to accept her as a daughter-in-law without a portion, but even to go in person and request the consent of her brother Lesbonicus, who is known to be as proud as he is now poor, and who is very likely to make his own poverty an objection to his sister's marrying into a rich family, though the lover is his personal friend. The father has an interview with him, but can only obtain his consent to such a marriage on condition that his friend will accept with her such dowry as he can give—the single farm which he has retained in his own possession out of all the family estate, and from which his faithful slave Stasimus—the classical prototype of Scott's Caleb Balderstone—is contriving to extract a living for his young master and himself. This honest fellow is present during part of the interview, and is horrified to hear the prodigal generosity with which the ruined heir insists, in spite of all the other's attempts to decline it, upon dowering his sister with the last remains of his estate. At last he draws Philto—the suitor's father—aside on some pretence, and the following dialogue ensues:—

Stasimus. I have a secret for your ear, sir—only you ;
Don't let *him* know I told you.

Philto. You may trust me.

Stas. By all that's good in heaven and earth, I warn
you,

Don't take that land—don't let your son set foot on it—
I'll tell you why.

Phil. Well,—I should like to hear.

Stas. Well, to begin with—(*confidentially*) the oxen,
when we plough it,
Invariably drop down dead in the fifth furrow.

Phil. (laughing). Stuff ! nonsense !

Stas. (getting more emphatic). People say there's devils
in it !

The grapes turn rotten there before they're ripe.

Lesbonicus (watching their conversation, and speaking to himself). He's humbugging our friend
there, I'll be bound !

'Tis a good rascal, though—he's stanch to me.

Stas. Listen again—in the very best harvest seasons,
You get from it three times less than what you've sown.

Phil. An excellent spot to sow bad habits in !
For there you're sure they won't spring up again.

Stas. There never was yet a man who had that land,
But something horrible always happened to him ;
Some were transported—some died prematurely—
Some hung themselves ! (*pauses to watch the effect.*) And
look at him, now, there—(*motioning towards his master*). The present owner—what is he ?
—a bankrupt.

Phil. (pretending to believe him). Well, heaven deliver
me from such a bargain !

Stas. Amen to that !—Ah ! you might say ‘deliver
me,’

If you knew all. Why, every other tree
Is blasted there by lightning ; all the hogs
Die of pneumonia : all the sheep are scabbed ;
Lose all their wool, they do, till they're as bare
As the back of my hand is. Why, there's not a nigger
(And *they'll* stand anything) could stand the climate ;
Die in six months, they all do, of autumn fever.

Phil. (coolly). Ah ! I daresay. But our Campanian
fellows
Are much more hardy than the niggers. Still,

This land, if it's at all what you describe it,
Would be a fine place for a penal settlement,
To banish rascals to, for the public good.

Stas. 'Tis just a nest of horrors, as it is ;
If you want anything bad,—there you may find it.

Phil. No doubt ;—and so you may in other places.

Stas. Now please don't let *him* know I've told you
this !

Phil. Oh—honour bright ! I hold it confidential.

Stas. Because, in fact, you see, he's very anxious
To be well rid of it, if he can find a man
That's fool enough to take it.—You perceive ?

Phil. I do : I promise you, it shan't be me.

Philto is unwilling either to accept the farm, or to hurt the feelings of Lesbonicus by the refusal—he will leave the two young friends, he says, to settle that matter between them. And poor old Stasimus is quite satisfied that his pious falsehood has saved this remnant of the family property.

Young Lysiteles is as reluctant to accept the offered marriage portion as his friend is determined, for his honour's sake, to give it : and the struggle between the two young men, which almost leads to a quarrel, gives occasion to a fine scene, though perhaps somewhat too wordy for our English taste. Lysiteles is the more hurt at his friend's obstinacy, because he has discovered his intention of quitting Athens, now that his patrimony is all gone, and taking service under some potentate in the East, the great field which was then open to young men of spirit and enterprise. Stasimus' despair, when he too learns this last resolution on the part of his young master, is highly comic : he will not desert him, even if he could, but he has no taste for a mili-

tary life—wearing clumsy boots, and carrying a heavy buckler, and a pack on his shoulders.

But Callicles has heard of the proposed marriage, and will by no means allow his absent friend's daughter to go to her bridegroom dowerless, when there is money stored away specially for that object. But how is it to be done without discovering to the public the secret of the buried treasure, which is sure to confirm the suspicion of his underhand dealings? and which treasure if the young spendthrift once comes to know of, the rest of it will very soon follow the estate. If Callicles gives the money as out of his own pocket, people will only say that he was now doling out a part of some larger fund, left in his hands in trust, and which the girl and her brother ought to have had long ago. He adopts the scheme of hiring one of those unscrupulous characters who hung about the law courts at Athens, as they do about our own, ready to undertake any business however questionable, and to give evidence to any effect required—"for a consideration." This man shall pretend to have just landed from foreign parts, and to have brought money from Charmides expressly for his daughter's marriage portion. The required agent is soon found, and his services engaged by Callicles for the "Three Silver Pieces," which gives the name to the play. He is equipped in some outlandish-looking costume, hired from a theatrical wardrobe, and knocks at the door of Charmides' house (a small apartment in which is still occupied by his son) as though just arrived from sea. But at the door he meets no less a person than Charmides himself, who has just returned from his long absence, has noticed

this strange-looking personage on his way from the harbour, and is much astonished to find him knocking at his own door. Still more surprised is he to hear that he is inquiring for his son Lesbonicus, and that he is bringing him a letter from his father. The scene between the pretended messenger and the returned traveller whose agent he professes to be,—the man's astonishment and embarrassment when he finds that he is talking to Charmides himself, and the consummate effrontery with which he faces the situation to the very last, long after he knows he is detected, is one of the most amusing scenes in Plautus, though unfortunately too long for insertion here. The imposter has not been prepared for any kind of cross-examination, and has even forgotten the name of Lesbonicus' father, from whom he asserts that he brings the money. His efforts to recover this name—which he says he has unfortunately “swallowed” in his hurry; his imaginary description of Charmides, who stands before him in person; the account he gives of his travels in countries he has never seen,—are all highly farcical. One argument in proof of the reality of his mission he advances triumphantly—the thousand gold pieces which he carries with him; if he did not know Charmides personally, would he ever have intrusted him with the money? At last his inquisitor announces himself—“I am Charmides—so hand me over my money.” The other is staggered for the moment: “Bless my life!” he says to himself—“why, here’s a greater impostor than I am!” But he soon recovers his coolness. “That’s all very well,” he replies; “but you never said a word about your being Charmides until I told you I had the gold. You are only

Charmides for a particular purpose—and that won't do."—"Well, but if I am not Charmides,"* says the father—not very cleverly—"who am I?" "Nay," says his opponent—"that's your business; so long as you are not the person I don't intend you to be, you may be anything you please." As he is shrewd enough, however, to discover that Charmides is the person whom he claims to be, and as the latter threatens to have him cudgelled if he does not leave his door, he makes his exit at last not in the least crestfallen, and congratulating himself that, come what will, he has safely pocketed the Three Silver Pieces: he has done his best, he declares (as indeed he has), to earn them fairly, and can only go back to his employers and tell them that his mission has failed.

The first person who meets Charmides on his return home is Stasimus. He has been drowning his dread of a military life in the wine-flagon, and has reached the sentimental stage of intoxication. His maundering moralities upon the wickedness and degeneracy of the present age, and the wickedness of the world in general, and his sudden recollection that while he is thus generalising upon questions of public interest his own particular back is in great danger, for having loitered at the wine-shop, are admirably given. His old master is all the while standing in the background, listening with much amusement to his soliloquy, and throwing in an occasional remark aside, by way of chorus. When at length he discovers himself, the joy of the faithful old tippler sobers him at once, and he proceeds to tell his master how affairs have been going on in his absence. Charmides is shocked to hear of the continued extra-

gance of his son, of his sale of the house, and the consequent loss of the buried treasure on which he had depended, and still more at the faithlessness of his friend,—who has not only taken no care to prevent this catastrophe, but has employed his knowledge of the secret to his own advantage in the most shameless manner, by becoming the purchaser of the house.

Of course such misunderstanding is soon cleared up. The father hears with joy of his daughter's approaching marriage, and thanks young Lysiteles warmly for his generous conduct, though he will not allow him—especially as he has made money during his absence abroad—to take into his house a portionless bride. But the young man has a favour to ask of much more importance: it is that Charmides will overlook and forgive the extravagance of his dear friend, his son,—who will, he assures him, do better in future. Somewhat reluctantly the father consents—he can refuse nothing at such a moment, and to so generous a petitioner. His judgment upon the offender forms a characteristic ending to the piece.

Charm. If you'll reform, my old friend Charicles
Here offers you his daughter—a good girl;
Say, will you marry her?

Lesbon. (eagerly). I will, dear father!
I will—and any one else besides, to please you.

Charm. Nay—one's enough: though I am angry with ye,
I'll not inflict a double chastisement;
That were too hard.

Callicles (laughing). Nay, scarcely, for his sins—
A hundred wives at once would serve him right.*

* This is the only comedy of Plautus which has been presented by Westminster scholars of late years. When it was acted in

II.—THE BRAGGADOCIO.

The hero—if he can be so called who is the very opposite of a hero—in this comedy is one of those swaggering soldiers of fortune who have already been briefly described. His name, which is a swagger in itself, is Pyrgopolinices—“Tower of Victory.” He is in the pay of Seleucus, for whom he is at present recruiting; but he has also served, by his own account—

“On the far-famed Gorgonidian plains,
Where the great Bumbomachides commanded—
Clytomedstoridysarchides’s son.”*

He is attended by his obsequious toady Artotrogus—“Bread-devourer”—who flatters his vanity and swears

1860, the humorous modern Latin Epilogue which now always follows the play (and which is really a short farce in itself) took an especially happy turn. A project was then on foot for removing the School to a different site, and Lesbonicus is introduced in this epilogue as offering to sell the old College premises; while “College John,” as the scholars’ official is always called, in the character of the slave Stasimus, endeavours to prevent the sale by enlarging upon the horrors of the Thames water and the squalor of Tothill Fields. The negotiation is stopped by the entrance of the Ghost of Dr Busby, who informs them of a treasure which he had buried under the old foundations. They proceed eagerly to dig, and the treasure proves to be—a gigantic rod! which is exhumed and displayed in triumph to the audience. This is, the old Master declares, the real key to honours—the “golden bough” of classic fable—

“Aurea virga tibi est, portas quæ pandit honorum.”

* We need not go far to seek the original of the opening lines of ‘Bombastes Furioso,’ where the hero asks—

“Aldibarontiphoskifornio,
How left you Chrononhotonthologos?”

to the truth of all his bragging stories—"maintaining his teeth," as he says, "at the expense of his ears." The Captain's stories are of such an outrageously lying description as to be somewhat too improbable for the subject of legitimate comedy, and we can only suppose that in this kind of fun the taste of a Roman audience preferred a strong flavour. He affects to believe that not only do all the men dread his prowess, but that all the women are charmed with his person: and his companion and flatterer does his best to persuade him that it is so.

Artotrogus. You saw those girls that stopped me yesterday?

Pyrgopolinices. What did they say?

Art. Why, when you passed, they asked me—
"What, is the great Achilles here?"—I answered,
"No—it's his brother." Then says t'other one—
"Troth, he *is* handsome! What a noble man!
What splendid hair!"

Pyrg. Now, did they *really* say so?

Art. They did indeed, and begged me, both of them,
To make you take a walk again to-day,
That they might get another sight of you.

Pyrg. (*sighing complacently*). 'Tis a great nuisance being
so *very* handsome! *

This hero gentleman has just carried off from Athens—by force, however, and not by the influence of his personal attractions—a young lady who is an object of tender interest to a gentleman of that city,

* So Le Capitan Matamore, in Corneille's 'L'Illusion Comique'—

"Ciel qui sais comme quoi j'en suis persecuté!
Un peu plus de repos avec moins de beauté."

who is at the time gone upon a voyage to Naupactus. His faithful slave Palestrio takes ship to follow him thither, but on his way falls into the hands of pirates, by whom he is sold, and, as it happens, taken to Ephesus and there purchased by Pyrgopolinices. He finds the lady shut up in half-willing durance in the Captain's house, and at once writes information of the fact to her Athenian lover, his master Pleusicles, who sails at once for Ephesus. On his arrival, he finds that an old friend of the family occupies the adjoining house : a jolly old bachelor, of thorough Epicurean tastes and habits, and quite ready to forward a lover's stratagem. By his good-natured connivance a door is broken through his house into the women's side of his neighbour's mansion, by which Pleusicles is enabled to hold communication with the object of his affections. But a servant of the Captain's, who has been specially charged to keep an eye upon the lady, happens to be running over the roof of the two houses in the pursuit of an escaped monkey, looks down through a skylight with the curiosity of his class, and is a witness of one of these stolen interviews between the lovers. How Philocomasium (for that is the lady's long Greek name*) has found her way into the house next door is what he does not understand ; but there she is, and he is determined to tell the Captain. First, however, he

* These Greek female names are anything but euphonious to English ears. But we must remember that what seems to us a harsh termination was softened away in the Latin pronunciation, and that in its Greek form it was a diminutive ; so that names ending in "ion" conveyed to their ear a *pet* sound, as in our Nellie, Bessie, &c.

takes into his counsels his new fellow-servant, Palestrio, and confides to him his discovery. Palestrio tries to persuade him that his eyes have deceived him, but finding him obstinately convinced of their accuracy, invents a story of a twin-sister, who by a curious coincidence has just come to Ephesus and taken the house next door, where she allows a lover of her own to visit her. The chief fun of the piece, which is somewhat of a childish character, consists in the ingenuity with which Philocomasium, with the aid of Palestrio, contrives by a change of costume to play the double part of herself and the imaginary twin-sister; much to the bewilderment of the Captain's watchful and suspicious retainer, who is ignorant of the existence of the secret passage by which at her pleasure she flits from house to house.

The catastrophe is brought about by the absorbing vanity of the military hero. He is persuaded by the ready Palestrio that a lady in the neighbourhood, of great charms and accomplishments, has fallen violently in love with him, and that if only out of charity it behoves him to have compassion on her. She has a jealous husband, and dare not invite him to her house, but asks to be allowed to call upon him at his own. In order to have the coast quite clear, he sends off Philocomasium for a while, in charge of the trusty Palestrio, who willingly undertakes to escort her—with her mother and the twin-sister, as he thinks—really with her lover Pleusicles, who, in the guise of a shipowner, carries her off to Athens. The fate of the Captain is that of Falstaff, in the 'Merry Wives of Windsor.' As soon as the love-stricken lady—who is

only a lady's-maid employed for the occasion—is ascertained to be paying her expected visit to this professional Adonis, his bachelor neighbour, from next door, enters in the character of the jealous husband, with a band of stout slaves, and beats him to a jelly.

III.—THE HAUNTED HOUSE (*MOSTELLARIA*).

The Latin name of this play means something like “The Goblin;” but perhaps the English title here given to it will better express the nature of the plot. A worthy citizen of Athens has been away for three years on a trading voyage to Egypt, and during his absence his son Philolaches, though a young man of amiable disposition, has gone altogether wrong, kept very dissolute and extravagant company, and spent the greatest part of his father’s money. In this he has been aided and abetted by Tranio, his valet and factotum,—one of those amusing rascals who seem to take delight in encouraging their young masters in such things, though they feel it is at the risk of their own backs.

The youth is just sitting down to supper with some of his friends (one of whom has come to the party already drunk), when Tranio, who has been down to the harbour to buy fish, comes in with the startling intelligence of the father’s return from sea; he has just got a glimpse of him as he landed. Philolaches feels that the evil day has come upon him at last. His first idea naturally is to get rid of his friends, have the supper-table cleared away, and make things look at least as quiet and respectable as possible. But his friend Callidamates is by this time so very drunk and

incapable that it is impossible to hope to get him safely off the premises in time ; especially as, in his drunken independence, the only notice he takes of the news is first to "hope the old gentleman's very well ;" secondly, to advise his son, if he doesn't want him, to "send him back again ;" and, lastly, to offer to fight him, then and there.

Philolaches. Who's that asleep there ? Wake him up,
do, Delphium !

Delphium. Callidamates ! Callidamates—wake ! (*shaking him.*)

Call. (*looking up drowsily.*) I am awake—all right.
Pass us the bottle.

Delph. Oh, do awake, pray do ! His father's come—
From abroad, you know ! (*Shakes him again.*)

Call. (*just opening his eyes.*) All right—hope 's pretty
well.

Phil. (*angrily.*) He's well enough, you ass !—I'm very
bad.

Call. Bad ! why,—what 's 'matter ?

Phil. Do get up, I say,
And go—my father's come.

Call. (*drowsily.*) Father's come, is he ?
Tell him—go back again. What the deuce 's want
here ?

Phil. (*in despair.*) What shall I do ? Zounds ! he'll be
here in a minute,
And find this drunken ass here in my company,
And all the rest of ye. And I've no time—
Beginning to dig a well when you're dying of thirst,—
That's what I'm doing ; just beginning to think
What I'm to do, and here's my father come !

Tranio (*looking at Call.*) He's put his head down and
gone to sleep again !

Phil. Will you get up? (*shaking him.*) I say,—my father's here!

Call. (*jumping up.*) Father here? where? Give me my slippers, somebody!

My sword, there!—polish the old gentleman off in no time
—Act ii. sc. 2.

But Tranio proves equal to the occasion. He desires them all to keep quiet where they are, to let him lock the house up and take the key of the street-door, and go to meet his elder master with a story which he has ready for him. The good citizen makes his appearance in the next scene, congratulating himself heartily on having escaped the perils of this his first—and, as he is determined it shall be, his last—sea voyage.

Enter THEUROPIDES—slaves following with his luggage.
TRANIO looking round a corner, and listening.

Theu. I do return you hearty thanks, good Neptune,
For letting me out of your clutches safe and sound,
Though scarce alive; but if from this time forward
You catch me setting foot in your dominions,
I give you leave—free leave—that very instant,
To do with me—what you've just tried to do.

Avaunt! Anathema! I do abjure ye
From this same day! (*looking back towards the harbour,*
and shaking his fist.) I've trusted to ye once,
But never will I run such risk again.

Tran. (*aside.*) Zounds, Neptune, you've just made a great mistake—
Lost such a charming opportunity!

Theu. Three years I've been in Egypt: here I am,
Come home at last!—How glad they'll be to see me!

Tran. (*aside.*) There's only one we had been more glad
to see—
The man who brought us word that you were drowned.

[THEUROPIDES advances to his own door, at which he knocks, and looks up at the closed windows. TRANIO comes forward.]

Tran. Who's this ! who ventures near this house of ours ?

Theu. Why, this is my man Tranio !

Tran. O, dear master,

O, welcome home ! I am so glad to see you—

Are you quite well ?

Theu. Quite, as you see (*knocks again*).

Tran. Thank heavens !

Theu. But you,—are ye all mad ?

Tran. Why so ?

Theu. Because

Here you are walking about, and nobody in.

(*Knocks and kicks at the door.*) Not a soul seems to hear.

Will nobody open ? (*Kicks again.*)

I shall kick the door down presently.

Tran. (*shuddering and shrieking*). O—O—Oh !

Don't ye do that, dear master—don't ye, don't ye !

—Act ii. sc. 2.

Then Tranio begins his story. The house is haunted. There is a ghost there, of a man who was murdered in it by the last owner for the sake of his gold, and buried under the floor. This ghost had come to young Philolaches in his sleep, nearly frightened him out of his senses, and warned him to quit his premises at once. Pluto would not admit him into the Shades, he said, because he had not been properly buried, and so he was obliged to live in this house, and he wanted it all to himself. So they had shut it up, Tranio tells the father, and left the ghost in possession ; and, for the present, his son is gone into the country. Just in the agony of the tale, a noise is heard inside

—the party there are not keeping so quiet as they ought.

Tran. (*pretending to be frightened, and catching his master by the arm.*)

Hush-sh ! (*Listening.*)

Theu. (*trembling.*) Eh ! what was it ?

Tran. (*looking aghast at Theu.*) Was it *him*, d'ye think ?

(*Listening at the key-hole.*) I heard a knocking.

Theu. Eh ! my blood runs cold !

Are the dead men coming from Acheron to fetch me ?

Tran. (*aside.*) Those fools will spoil it all, if they're not quiet.

Theu. What are you saying to yourself, sir—eh ?

Tran. Go from the door, sir, pray—run, do, I beg you !

Theu. (*looking round in terror.*) Where shall I run to ? why don't you run yourself ?

Tran. (*solemnly.*) Well—I've no fear—I keep an honest conscience.

Callidamates (*inside.*) Hallo there, Tranio ! (*Theuro-pides runs off.*)

Tran. (*going close to the door, and whispering.*) Don't call me, you fool !

(*A loud, as to the ghost.*) Don't threaten me—it wasn't *I* kicked the door.

Theu. (*putting his head round the corner.*) O dear ! what is it ? why do you shake so, Tranio ?

Tran. (*looking round.*) Was it *you* called me ?—Well, so help us heaven,

I thought it was the dead man scolding me

For making all that rapping at his door.

But why do you stand there ? why don't you do

What I just told you ?

Theu. (*clasping his hands.*) O dear ! what was that ?

Tran. Run, run ! don't look behind you—and cover your head up !

[THEUROPIDES runs off with his cloak over his head.

—Act ii. sc. 2.

There may not be very much wit in the scene, but it is a fair specimen of the style in which Plautus seems to have excelled. It is full of bustle and spirit, and would act, as is the case with so many of his scenes, far better than it reads. If any reader will imagine the two characters in the hands of say Mr Keeley and Mr Buckstone, he will perhaps admit that it would be sufficiently laughable even if it were put exactly as it is upon the stage of a modern minor theatre.

The "Ghost" is left, for the present, in undisturbed possession. But Tranio's plan is nearly frustrated at the outset ; for, as he is following his master down the street, they meet a money-lender to whom the son is indebted, and who is come to demand his interest. The old gentleman overhears the conversation between the creditor and Tranio, who vainly tries to prevent him from bawling out his complaints of non-payment. He succeeds, however, in persuading the father that his son has only been borrowing in order to pay the deposit-money upon the purchase of a house (which he has been driven to buy in consequence of the Ghost's occupation of the old one), and which is, as he assures him, a most excellent bargain. Theuropides is naturally anxious to see the new house at once ; and Tranio, almost in despair, declares that it is that of their next-door neighbour, Simo, whom he sees just coming out of his door on his way to the Forum. Tranio goes up to this person and requests permission

for his master to look over the house, which he wishes to copy, as a model of admirable contrivance, in some new buildings which he is about to make on his own ground. The owner, much flattered, begs them to walk over it "just as though it were their own;" an expression which rather amuses Theeuropides, as he is about to make it his own in reality by paying the rest of the purchase-money. Tranio adroitly whispers to him not to say a word about the sale, "from motives of delicacy :" poor Simo, he assures him, has been obliged to part with his family property owing to reduced circumstances, and the whole transaction is naturally a sore subject to him. Theeuropides takes the hint at once, praising his servant at the same time for his thoughtfulness and good feeling. He is charmed with the house, with the terms of the purchase, and with the business-like habits of his excellent son.

But the father's dream is speedily dispelled. He meets in the street, near his own door, a slave of the young gentleman who is at this moment sleeping off his debauch in his son's apartments, and who has come, in obedience to the prudent orders issued beforehand upon such occasions, to convey his master home. Theeuropides would fain persuade him that there is some mistake ; he must have come to the wrong house ; this has been shut up and unoccupied for some time ; and his son Philolaches is quite unlikely to keep the kind of company to which this roysterer belongs. But the slave knows his business better, and in defence of his own assertions tears the veil somewhat rudely from the old gentleman's eyes. If he could be supposed to have any doubts remaining, they are removed by a

second interview with his neighbour Simo, who laughs at the notion of his house having been sold without himself being aware of it. It only remains for the deluded father to take vengeance on Tranio, and this he will set about at once. One favour he will ask of Simo—"Lend me a couple of stout slaves, and a good whip or two ;"—and, thus provided, he goes in quest of the culprit.

Tranio discovers that all is lost except his spirit. That still keeps up : and he appears to have propped it with an extra cup or two. His soliloquy, in the hands of a good actor, would no doubt be effective. He has succeeded in getting the revellers out of the house before the angry father comes into it ; but they have now lost all faith in him as an adviser, and what step he is to take next is by no means clear even to himself.

TRANIO (*solus*).

The man who loses heart when things go crooked,
In my opinion, he's not worth a rap—
What a "rap" means, now, blest if I can tell !
Well—when the master bid me fetch the young one—
Out of the country (*laughs to himself*), ha, ha ! Well, I
went—
Not into the country—to the garden-gate ;
And brought out the whole lot of 'em—male and female.
When I had thus safely withdrawn my troops
Out of their state of siege, I called a council—
A council of war, you know—of my fellow-rascals;
And their very first vote was to turn me out of it.
So I called another council—of myself;
And I am doing—what I understand

Most people do in awkward circumstances—
Make 'em as much more awkward as they can.

—Act v. sc. 1.

His master comes to look for him, followed by two slaves carrying whips and fetters, whom he keeps in hiding for the present in the background ; but Tranio, quite aware of what is in store for him, takes refuge at the family altar, and will listen to no persuasions to come away. From this vantage-ground he holds an argument with his master ; persuades him that his prodigal son has done nothing out of the way—only what other young men of spirit do ; and when Theeuropides vents his wrath against such a shameful piece of deception in a slave, gravely advises him to hold his tongue at all events on that point. With his grey hairs, he surely ought to have been wiser ; if people once come to know how he has allowed himself to be duped, they will infallibly work him into a plot for the next new comedy.

Tranio gets off at last, by the intercession of Callidamates, who has sobered himself sufficiently to come forward and express repentance on the part of his young friend, and to entreat that all may be forgotten and forgiven ; offering, handsomely enough, to pay off out of his own pocket the little debt to the money-lender. Tranio assures his master that he will not lose much by forgiving him this time—the whipping which he is longing to give now need only be a pleasure deferred, inasmuch as he is quite certain to do something to deserve one to-morrow. Which very characteristic witticism brings down the curtain.

Upon this comedy Regnard, who perhaps ranks next

to Molière of the French comic dramatists, founded his play, in one act, of ‘Le Rétour Imprévu ;’ and Fielding’s ‘Intriguing Chambermaid’ is little more than a translation of it. But Dunlop remarks that neither the French nor the English adapters have availed themselves of the hint which Plautus left for them, of a telling scene in which the previous occupant of the “Haunted House” might be charged by the excited father with the murder of his imaginary guest.

IV.—THE SHIPWRECK (RUDENS).

This is a play of a different character in many respects, and comes nearer to what we should call a melodramatic spectacle than anything else. The Latin title is simply “The Rope”—given to it because the rope of a fisherman’s net is an important instrument in the *dénouement*. But the whole action turns upon a shipwreck, and this is the title preferred by some English authorities.

The prologue, which is in a higher strain than Plautus commonly aspires to, is spoken in the character of Arcturus,—the constellation whose rising and setting was supposed to have very much to do with storms. The costume in which he appears is evidently brilliant and characteristic.

Of his high realm, who rules the earth and sea
And all mankind, a citizen am I.
Lo, as you see, a bright and shining star,
Revolving ever in unfailing course
Here and in heaven : Arcturus am I hight.
By night I shine in heaven, amidst the gods ;

I walk unseen with men on earth by day.
 So, too, do other stars step from their spheres,
 Down to this lower world ; so willeth Jove,
 Ruler of gods and men ; he sends us forth
 Each on our several paths throughout all lands,
 To note the ways of men, and all they do ;*
 If they be just and pious ; if their wealth
 Be well employed, or squandered harmfully ;
 Who in a false suit use false witnesses ;
 Who by a perjured oath forswear their debts ;—
 Their names do we record and bear to Jove.
 So learns He day by day what ill is wrought
 By men below ; who seek to gain their cause
 By perjury, who wrest the law to wrong ;
 Jove's court of high appeal rehears the plaint,
 And mulcts them tenfold for the unjust decree.
 In separate tablets doth he note the good.
 And though the wicked in their hearts have said,
 He can be soothed with gifts and sacrifice,
 They lose their pains and cost, for that the god
 Accepts no offering from a perjured hand.

After this fine exordium, so unlike the ordinary tone of the writer that we may be sure he is here translating from a great original, the prologue goes on to set forth the story of the piece. The speaker gives the audience some description of the opening scene, and a key to the characters. It is the tradition of the com-

* The same idea occurs in a well-known passage in Homer :—
 “ Gods in the garb of strangers to and fro
 Wander the cities, and men’s ways discern ;
 Yea, through the wide earth in all shapes they go,
 Changed, yet the same, and with their own eyes learn
 How live the sacred laws, who hold them, and who spurn.”
 Odyss. xvii. 485 (Worsley’s Transl.)

mentators, and the wording of the prologue corroborates it, that the mounting of this piece, both in scenery and machinery, was very costly and elaborate. It opens, like Shakspeare's 'Tempest,' with a storm—or rather on the morning after.* The sea forms the background; on one side is the city of Cyrene in the distance, on the other, a temple of Venus, with a cottage near. This cottage is the residence of Daemones, once a citizen of Athens, but who, having lost his property and met with other troubles, has left his native country and settled down here in retirement. He and his slaves are come out to look to the repairs of their cottage, which has suffered by the storm. A boat appears struggling through the waves in the distance, which, as it gets nearer, is seen to contain two girls, who after great danger (described by one of the slaves, who is watching, in a passage which a good actor would no doubt make sufficiently effective) make good their landing among the rocks, and meet at last upon the stage, each having thought the other lost. One of them is Palæstra: a free-born girl of Athens, but stolen and sold, as she tells us, in her infancy. Pleusidippus, a young Athenian, had seen her at Cyrene, fallen violently in love with her, and made proposals to the slave-merchant for her ransom. But that worthy individual, thinking that he could make a better bargain for such wares in Sicily, had just set sail for that island, carrying Palæstra and her fellow-captives with him, when the whole party are wrecked here on the coast, just going out of harbour.

* Possibly the storm was represented on the stage during the delivery of the prologue, before the action of the piece began.

The two girls, drenched as they are, take refuge in the Temple of Venus, where they ask the protection of the Priestess. That good lady is the very model of an ecclesiastical red-tapist. Though they tell their sad story, she objects that they ought to have come in the proper garb of supplicants—in a white robe, and bringing with them a victim; and is hardly satisfied with poor Palæstra's explanation of the great difficulty which a young woman who had narrowly escaped drowning herself would find in carrying a white dress and a fat lamb with her.

Labrax, the slave-dealer, whom every one hoped had been drowned according to his deserts, has also escaped from the wreck and got ashore. Not without the loss, however, of all his money, which has gone to the bottom, and with it a small case of jewellery, family tokens belonging to Palæstra, of which he had obtained possession. He hears that the two girls who are his property are hidden in the temple, and proceeds to drag them thence by force. He is met there, however, by a servant of young Pleusidippus, who is in search of his master, and who runs to Dæmones's cottage for help. The owner comes out with two stout slaves, rescues Palæstra and her companion, and leaves Labrax in custody, the slaves standing over him with cudgels, until the case can be investigated. Pleusidippus soon arrives upon the scene, his servant having hurried to inform him of the state of affairs—that his dear Palæstra has escaped from the wreck, and taken refuge in the temple, from which Labrax would have dragged her but for the timely interference of a very worthy old gentleman. The young man hauls the

slave-dealer off, with very little ceremony, before the nearest magistrate, to answer both for his breach of contract and his attempt at sacrilege. And with this scene ends the third act of the drama.

Then there is an interval of time before the commencement of the fourth act. Gripus, one of Daemones's slaves, has been out fishing. He has taken no fish; but has had a haul which will prove, he hopes, to be of more importance. He has brought up in his net a heavy wallet, and feels certain that it contains gold; enough, no doubt, to purchase his freedom, and to make him a rich man for the rest of his life besides. His soliloquy, as to what he will do with all his riches, reminds us not a little of the dream of Alnaschar.

Now, this shall be my plan—I'm quite determined :
I'll do it cunningly ; I'll go to my master,
With just a little money from time to time,
To buy my freedom : then, when I am free,
I'll buy a farm—I'll build a house—I'll have
A great many slaves. Then I shall make a fortune
By my big merchant-ships. I shall be a prince,
And talk to princes. Then I'll build a yacht,
Just for a fancy, and like Stratonicus
Sail round the seaport towns.* When my renown
Spreads far and wide, then—then, I'll found a city ;
I'll call it “Gripè,” in memory of my name
And noble acts ; I'll found an empire there.
I do resolve great things within this breast (*striking his chest*) ;

* Stratonicus was treasurer to Philip and Alexander, and probably thought himself a greater man than either of his masters. The allusion to Alexandria in “Gripè” is obvious.

But for the present, I must hide my windfall.

(*Takes his breakfast out of his scrip, and looks at it.*)

But more's the pity that so great a man

Must for to-day have such a sorry breakfast!

—Act iv. sc. 2.

Before he has time to hide his booty, Trachalio, the slave of Pleusidippus, who has been watching all Gripus's proceedings, comes up, and wants to claim half-shares in the contents. The dialogue between the two has some amusing points, though it is rather too much spun out for modern taste. Trachalio declares that he knows the person to whom the wallet formerly belonged ; Gripus replies that he knows to whom it belongs *now*, which is of much more importance—it belongs to him. All *that* he catches belongs to him, clearly ; nobody ever disputed it before. Trachalio argues that this is not a fish. It *is* a fish, declares Gripus ; "all's fish that comes to the net"—using our proverb in almost so many words. This sort of fish doesn't grow in the sea, says the other. Gripus declares that it does—only the species, he is *sorry* to say, is very seldom caught. He is a fisherman, *and* knows a good deal more about fish, he should hope, than a landsman. Trachalio protests it is with him a matter of conscience : since he has seen the wallet fished up, unless he goes and tells the owner, he shall be as great a thief as Gripus ; but he is willing to share that responsibility, provided he shares the prize. They very nearly come to blows about it ; but at last Trachalio proposes to submit the dispute to arbitration ; and as the cottage of Dæmones is close at hand, they agree that he shall decide as to the disposal of the property—

Trachalio not being aware of Gripus's connection with the old gentleman, and Gripus hoping that his master will surely give an award in his favour.

When the wallet is opened, it is found to contain, besides valuable property belonging to Labrax, the precious casket containing Palæstra's family relics: and, by desire of Dæmones, she describes the articles which ought to be in it, in order to prove her claim to its ownership. To his joy and surprise, one of these relics, a small toy implement, bears his own name, and another that of his wife. Palæstra is their long-lost daughter, stolen in her childhood, and thus restored. Of course she is handed over to her lover Pleusidippus, a free woman.

The disposal of the claims to the rest of the wallet's contents hardly meets our notions of dramatic justice. Dæmones retains in his possession the prize which poor Gripus has fished up, in order to restore it to its owner; not only without any hint of salvage-money, but with the addition of a long moral lecture to his slave upon honesty. This is all very well; but the subsequent proceedings serve to show that if it was a characteristic of the slave to be always ready to cheat his master, the master had also his peculiar idea of honesty as between himself and his slave. Gripus meets Labrax lamenting for his lost wallet, and as a last hope of making something out of his good luck, agrees to inform him of the whereabouts of the missing treasure for the consideration of a talent of good money paid down. Dæmones, when he comes to hear of the arrangement, ratifies it so far as this: Gripus is his property; therefore, what is Gripus's is his. Labrax

has to pay the talent into the hands of Dæmones, who applies half to the ransom of his daughter's friend and companion in misfortune, and allows the other half as the price of Gripus's freedom. The reply which that personage makes previously to his master's lecture on morality seems to show that he took it for about as much as it was worth.

Ah ! so I've heard the players on the stage
Rehearse the very finest moral sentiments,
And with immense applause ; showing quite clearly
All that a wise man ought to do : and then
The audience would go home, and not a soul of 'em
Would follow that grand preaching in their practice.*

The play called *CISTELLARIA* — “The Casket” — turns upon the same incidents—the loss of a daughter when young, and her discovery by her parents by means of a casket of trinkets which had been attached to her person.† The copies of this play are very imperfect, and there is a want of interest in the scenes. One passage, in which Halisca, the slave who has dropped the casket in the street and returns to look for it, appeals path-

* A portion of this comedy appears to have been performed as an afterpiece in the Dormitory at Westminster in 1798, when a very clever “Fisherman’s Chorus,” written in rhyming Latin, by the well-known “Jemmy Dodd,” then Usher, was introduced.—See *Lusus Alt. Westm.*, i. 177.

† Parents had no hesitation in “exposing” a child whose birth was for any reason inconvenient ; leaving it to die, or be picked up by some charitable stranger, as might be. But it was held a sin to do this without leaving something valuable on the child’s person : and jewels, or other articles by which it might possibly be recognised afterwards, were often fastened to its clothes.

etically to the audience, to know whether any of them have picked it up, and will restore it, and so save her from a whipping, may remind a modern reader of Molière's Harpagon looking among the audience for the thief of his money. The despairing taunt with which she turns away, after pausing for some reply—

“ ‘Tis no use asking—there’s not one among ye
Does aught but laugh at a poor woman’s troubles”—

is strong presumptive evidence that the spectators at a Roman comedy were almost exclusively men.

V.—THE CAPTIVES.

This pretty little drama is quite of a different complexion from the rest. The author tells us, in his prologue, that we are not to expect to find here any of the old stock characters of comedy, who, as he is free to confess, are not always of the most reputable kind. The interest is, in fact, rather pathetic than comic, and the plot is of the simplest kind. Almost the only comic element is supplied by the speaker of the prologue, who has a joke or two for the audience, of a very mild and harmless kind. The principal characters in the play appear to have been grouped in a kind of tableau on the stage while the prologue was delivered, in this as in some other plays. The prologist informs the audience that the two captives who stand in chains on his right and left, are Philocrates, a young noble of Elis, and his slave Tyndarus. There is war between Elis and the Ætolians; and these two prisoners, recently taken in battle, have been purchased amongst others by Hegio, a wealthy citizen of Ætolia, whose

own son is now, by the fortune of war, a prisoner in Elis. The father is sparing no cost in purchasing such captives of rank and birth as are brought to Ætolia and sold as slaves, in the hope of being able thus to effect an exchange for his son. He feels the loss of this son all the more, because his younger brother was carried off in his infancy by a revengeful slave, and he has never seen him since. “Do you understand, now?” says the speaker to the audience—“I hear a gentleman standing up at the back of the gallery say ‘no.’ Then come a little nearer, sir, if you please; I’m not going to crack my voice in bawling to you at that distance. And if you’ve not money enough to pay for a seat, you’ve money enough to walk out, which I recommend you to do. And now—you gentlemen that *can* afford to pay for your seats,—have the goodness to listen, while I continue my story.” He goes on, after the fashion which has been noticed as common in such prologues, to sketch in brief the whole plot. He begs, however, to assure the audience, confidentially, that they need not be alarmed because there is a war going on in this play between Elis and Ætolia. He promises them—quite in the spirit of Bottom and his company of players—that they “will leave the killing out;” all the battles shall be fought behind the scenes. It would never do for them, he says, a company of poor comedians, to encroach upon the domain of tragedy. If any gentleman present wants a fight, he must get one up on his own account—and it shall go hard but that the present speaker will find a match for him, if he be so inclined. He concludes by asking their favourable verdict in the dramatic contest:—

And so I make my bow. Sirs, fare ye well ;
Be gentle judges of our comedy,
As ye are—doubtless—valorous hearts in war.

The interest of the drama lies in the generous devotion of the slave Tyndarus to his young master. Hegio has ascertained that his captive Philocrates is the only son of a man of great wealth, and hopes that by sending a message to the father he may enlist his interest at Elis in making search for his own son among the Aetolian prisoners there, and sending him home in exchange for Philocrates. But this latter has, at the suggestion of Tyndarus, exchanged clothes with him, and the slave, who is nearly of the same age, and of noble presence, personates the master. Under this mistake Hegio sends the slave (as he thinks) to Elis to negotiate there with the father of Philocrates the release of his son. But it is really the young noble who is sent, and Tyndarus who personates him remains a prisoner in his place. There is a fine passage in which the disguised slave appeals to Hegio for generous treatment during his captivity.

As free a man as was your son, till now,
Was I ; like him, the hapless chance of war
Robbed me of liberty ; he stands a slave
Among my people, even as here I stand
Fettered before you. There is One in heaven,
Be sure of it, who sees and knows all things
That all men do. As you shall deal with me,
So will He deal with him. He will show grace
To him who sheweth grace ; He will repay
Evil for evil. (*Hegio appears moved.*) Weep you for
your son ?
So in my home my father weeps for me.

The parting between Tyndarus and his master gives rise to another scene which would be highly effective in the hands of good actors. The two young men had been brought up together, it must be remembered, from childhood, had played the same games, gone to the same school, and served in the same campaign. There is an equality of feeling between them, which even the miserable conditions of slavery have not been able to prevent. Philocrates, speaking as Tyndarus, asks the latter if he has any message to send home to his father.

Tyndarus (as Philocrates). Say I am well ; and tell him this, good Tyndarus,

We two have lived in sweetest harmony,
Of one accord in all things ; never yet
Have you been faithless, never I unkind.
And still, in this our strait, you have been true
And loyal to the last, through woe and want,
Have never failed me, nor in will nor deed.

This when your father hears, for such good service
To him and to his son, he cannot choose
But give you liberty. I will insure it,
If I go free from hence. 'Tis you alone,
Your help, your kindness, your devoted service
Shall give me to my parents' arms again.

Philocrates (as Tyndarus). I have done this : I'm glad
you should remember ;
And you have well deserved it : (*emphatically*) for if I
Were in my turn to count up all the kindness
That you have shown to me, day would grow night
Before the tale were told. Were you my slave,
You could have shown no greater zeal to serve me.

Hegio is touched by the affection shown by the young pair ; and Tyndarus is treated as liberally as a prisoner can be. But there is another prisoner of war of whom Hegio has heard, who knows this young man Philocrates and his family, and is anxious to have an interview with him, which Hegio good-naturedly allows. This man at once detects the imposture ; and though Tyndarus attempts for a time (in a scene which must be confessed to be somewhat tedious) to maintain his assumed character in spite of the other's positive assertions, he is convicted of the deception, and ordered by the indignant Hegio to be loaded with heavy chains, and taken to work in the stone-quarries ; which would seem to have been as terrible a place of punishment in Greece as we know they were in Sicily. In vain does Tyndarus plead his duty to his master : in vain does he appeal to Hegio's feelings as a father—

Tyn. Think, now—if any slave who called you master Had done this for your son, how you had thanked him ! Would you have grudged him liberty, or no ? Would you have loved him above all the rest ? Nay—answer me.

He. I grant it.

Tyn. Oh, why then Are you thus wroth with me for doing likewise ?

He. Your faith to him was treachery to me.

Tyn. What ! would you ask that one brief night and day Should give you claim on a poor captive's service Just fallen within your power, to cancel his With whom I lived and whom I loved from childhood ?

Heg. Then seek your thanks from him.—Lead him away.

In vain does his fellow-captive, whose evidence has

brought down Hegio's wrath upon him, plead on his behalf. Tyndarus is dragged off to the quarries, preserving his calmness of demeanour to the last.

Well—death will come—thy threats can reach no further;
And though I linger to a long old age,
Life's span of suffering is but brief.—Farewell!
I might find plea to curse thee—but—farewell!

—Act iii. sc. 5.

The *dénouement* comes rapidly. There is a long supposed interval between the third and the two last brief acts of the drama,—which in a modern play would be rather termed scenes. Philocrates returns from Elis, and brings with him Hegio's son Philopolemus, whom he has ransomed from captivity. But he has not forgotten his faithful Tyndarus, and has come in person to insure his liberation. But this is not all. He has also met with the runaway slave who, twenty years ago, had stolen from his home the younger son of Hegio. When this man is now cross-examined by his old master, it is discovered that he had fled to Elis, and there sold the child to the father of Philocrates, who had made a present of him to his own boy, as was not unusual, to be a kind of live toy and humble playfellow. It is this very Tyndarus, who now stands before his father loaded with chains and haggard with suffering of that father's infliction. The noble nature displayed by the captive is explained by his noble blood.

No one will deny that it is a pretty little drama, with a good deal of quiet pathos in it. But (if we have the piece complete, which may be doubtful) whatever pathos a modern audience would find in these last

scenes would be due to such force of expression and by-play as could be thrown into them by clever actors ; they are very bald indeed in the reading. The claim which the speaker of the brief epilogue makes for the play, that its morality is of the purest and simplest, is well deserved. It contains, strange to say, no female character whatever. For these and other reasons ‘The Captives,’ in spite of the lack of comic element, used to be a very favourite selection with English schoolmasters, in the days when the performance of a Latin comedy by the elder scholars seems to have formed part of the annual routine in most of our large schools. Yet, strange to say, there is no record of it having ever been performed at Westminster. Perhaps the absence of those distinctly comic characters and situations which are made so telling in the annual performance by the Queen’s Scholars has been the reason of its neglect.

VI.—THE TWO MENÆCHMI.

This comedy deserves notice not so much for its own merits—for whatever they might have appeared to a Roman audience, they are not highly appreciable by our taste—but because upon it Shakspeare founded his ‘Comedy of Errors.’ It appears to have been the only work of Plautus which had at that time been translated into English, which may account for its being the only one from which Shakspeare seems to have borrowed. The plot is improbable in the highest degree, though admitting some farcical situations. It all turns upon the supposed resemblance between two twin-brothers — so strong as to deceive their

servants, their nearest friends, and even their wives. Antipholus of Ephesus and Antipholus of Syracuse are but reproductions of Menæchmus of Epidamnus and Menæchmus Sosicles—the twins of Plautus's comedy, who were separated in their youth, and whose marvellous likeness, which makes it impossible to distinguish between them, leads to the series of ludicrous mistakes and entanglements which are at last set right by their personal meeting on the stage. Shakspeare has added the pair of Dromios, who, like their masters, are duplicates of each other: thereby increasing the broad fun of the piece, such as it is, and not materially increasing the improbability. The use of masks upon the Roman stage made the presentation of the likeness comparatively easy; whereas in the English play all has to depend upon exact similarity of costume and the making up of the faces of the two actors, which is not always satisfactory. The incidents in the Latin play are not so amusing as in Shakspeare's version of it, and the morals much more objectionable.

VII.—AMPHITRYON.

‘Amphitryon’ is also founded on a famous case of mistaken identity. It is termed by Plautus a “tragedy;” which does not mean that there is anything in it to which we should apply the word “tragic,” but merely that the introduction of gods amongst the characters gives it some of the features of classic tragedy. In saying that it is a dramatic version of the myth of Jupiter and Alcmena, enough has been said to indicate that the morality in this case

is that common to pagan mythology. This did not prevent it from being acted at Westminster so late as 1792. There are well-known French and English imitations of it : the ‘Amphitryon’ of Molière and ‘The Two Sosias’ of Dryden. It must be said, at least, in favour of the great French dramatist, that the morality in his play is higher than that of the original. ‘Amphitryon,’ however, has some wit, which is more than can be well said for the ‘Menæchmi.’ Here, too, it is possible that we have the original of the two Dromios in Shakspeare’s comedy. For, as Jupiter has assumed the character and likeness of Amphitryon, so he has directed Mercury to put on the resemblance of Sosia, Amphitryon’s body-slave. The scene in which poor Sosia, sent by his master (who has just returned from his campaign) to announce his arrival to his wife Alcmena, is met at the door by his double in the person of Mercury, is very comically drawn. It has the defect of being, at least to our modern taste, somewhat too prolonged, and only a portion of it can be given here. Mercury insists upon it that he is the true and original Sosia, gives the other a drubbing as an impudent impostor, and threatens to give him a worse if he does not at once take himself off. Sosia becomes extremely puzzled as to his own identity when his rival, in reply to his questions, shows an intimate knowledge of all his master’s movements during the late campaign, and especially in the matter of a gold cup presented to him out of the spoils, which is secured in a casket under Amphitryon’s own seal—which seal, however, this duplicate Sosia can describe perfectly.

Sosia (aside). He beats me there. I must look out, it seems,

For a new name. Now where on earth could this fellow
Have been, to see all that ? I'll have him yet ;
Things that I did by myself, with no one near—
What I did in the tent—it can't be possible
He'll tell me that. (*ALOUD.*) Now look—if you be Sosia,
What was I doing in my master's tent,
That day they'd such hard fighting in the front ?
Come—tell me that, my friend—and I'll give in.

Mercury (slily). There was a cask of wine : I filled a
pitcher—

Sos. (to himself). He's not far out.

Mer. Filled it with good red wine—
As honest stuff as ever grew in grape.

Sos. Marvellous !—unless this chap was *in* the cask !—
Fact—I *did* fill the pitcher—and drank it too.

Mer. How now ? have I convinced you I *am* Sosia ?

Sos. (puzzled). D'ye say *I'm* not ?

Mer. How can you be, if I *am* ?

Sos. (half crying). I swear by Jove I *am* Sosia—it's no lie.

Mer. I swear by Mercury it is : Jove won't believe you ;
He'd trust my word far sooner than your oath.

Sos. Who am I then, I ask you, if not Sosia ?

Mer. That I can't tell you—but you can't be Sosia,
So long as I am : when I've done with the name,
Then you may take it. Now be off with you,
Name or no name, unless you want a thrashing.

Sos. Upon my life, now that I look at him,
And recollect myself—(I take a peep
Into my master's glass occasionally)
It strikes me that there *is* an uncommon likeness. (*Examines Mercury furtively.*)

The broad-brimmed hat and surcoat—just the same ;
He looks as like me as I do myself !
Legs—feet—proportions—short-cropped hair—bull-neck—

Eyes—nose—lips—cheeks—the very chin and beard—
 The whole of him is me ! the very ditto !
 I wonder whether he's got whip-marks on his back—
 If so, the copy's perfect.* (*Cogitating.*) Still—it seems,
 When I consider on't, I must be I :
 I'm the same man I was ; I know my master—
 I know his house,—there 'tis. I've got my senses ;
 (*Pinching himself.*) And I can feel. No ; I will *not*
 believe
 A word this fellow says. I'll knock again. (*Goes up to
 the door.*)
Mer. (*rushing up*). Hallo ! where now ?
Sos. Home, to be sure.
Mer. Be off—
 Be off like lightning, if you'd keep whole bones !
Sos. Mayn't I give master's message to his lady ?
Mer. To his—by all means ; only not to ours :
 If you provoke me more, I'll break your head.
Sos. (*running away*). No—no ! I'll go ! Poor devil that
 I am !
 Where did I lose myself ? when was I changed ?
 How did I lose my corporal capacity ?
 Did I forget myself, when I went abroad,
 And leave myself at home here, by mistake ?
 For he's got what *was* me, there's no doubt of it ;
 All the outside, I mean, that I used to have.

* Molière has improved upon this passage, in the scene in which Sosia tells his master of the beating which he has just received from his own double, and how he was at last convinced that this latter was the real man :—

“ Longtemps d'imposteur j'ai traité ce moi-même ;
 Mais à me reconnaître enfin il m'a forcé :
 J'ai vu que c'était moi, sans aucune stratagème ;
 Des pieds jusq'à la tête il est comme moi fait,—
 Beau, l'air noble, bien pris, les manières charmantes ! ”
 —Amphit., act ii. sc. 1.

Well—I'll go back again and tell my master:
 Perhaps *he* won't own me! The gods grant he don't!
 I shall be free then, even if I'm nobody.

—Act i. sc. 1.

The scene in which the pilot of the ship is unable to decide between the false Amphitryon and the true, when at last they are brought upon the stage together, is probably only a “restoration” of the mutilated work of Plautus. Molière has substituted Sosia for the pilot, and makes him decide in favour of the false pretender. The convincing argument which confirms him in this decision has passed into a proverb, better known perhaps in itself than in its context. Jupiter, in his assumed character of Amphitryon, is made to reserve the disputed identity for the verdict of the Thebans in full assembly: meanwhile he invites all the company present to dinner:—

“*Sosia.* Je ne me trompais, Messieurs, ce mot termine
 Toute l'irrésolution;
 Le véritable Amphitryon
 Est l'Amphitryon où l'on dîne.”*

VIII.—THE POT OF GOLD (AULULARIA).

The prologue to this comedy is spoken in the character of the “Lar Familiaris,” as the Romans called him—a sort of familiar spirit supposed to be attached to every Roman household, who had his own little altar

* Dunlop shows, however, that this is really borrowed from an older comedy on the same subject by Rotrou—‘Les Deux Sosies’—which the later author has laid under contribution in other scenes. Sosia’s words in Rotrou’s play are—“Point, point d’Amphitryon où l’on ne dîne point.”

near the family hearth, and whose business it was, if duly cultivated, to look after the family fortunes,—a private “Robin Goodfellow.” He informs the audience that the owners of the establishment over which he presides at present have been a generation of misers. The grandfather had buried under the hearth a “Pot of Gold,” intrusting the secret only to him, the Lar, and praying him to see to its safe keeping ; and too covetous, even at his death, to disclose this secret to his son. The son was rather worse than his father, grudging the Lar his sacrifices even more than the old man had ; and therefore, the Lar saw no good reason for discovering the treasure to *him*. And now the grandson, Euclio, is as bad as either father or grandfather. But he has a daughter ; rather a nice young woman, the Lar considers : she is constantly paying him little attentions, bringing incense, and wine, and garlands, and suchlike, to dress his altar : and as the Lar must have seen a good deal of her, and the audience is never allowed to see her at all, they have to take his word for her attractions. She will be expecting a husband soon : and the family guardian has fixed upon one for her—Lyconides, nephew to one of their next-door neighbours, Megadorus. But as he has some reason to know that the young man would not be acceptable to her father, he will contrive that the uncle shall ask the girl in marriage for himself, and afterwards resign in his nephew’s favour. And he has made known to Euclio the secret of the buried treasure, in the hope that out of it he will provide a liberal dowry for the young lady who is so zealous in her household devotions.

But Euclio has no intention of using the gold in that or in any other fashion. It becomes his one delight, and his perpetual torment. He leaves it buried in its hiding-place : but he is in continual terror lest it should be discovered. He scarcely dares move from home, lest when he returns he should find it gone. Every noise that he hears, he fancies proceeds from some attempt to carry off his treasure. He leads his poor old housekeeper, his one slave Staphyla, a wretched life, from his perpetual worrying. When his neighbour Megadorus comes to ask the hand of his daughter in marriage, he is sure that it is because he has heard in some way of the gold. His continual protest is that he is miserably poor. One of the most ludicrous situations is the dilemma in which he finds himself placed, when upon some occasion a dole of public money is announced for the poorer citizens. If he does not attend and claim his share, his neighbours will think he is a rich man, and be sure to try to hunt out his money : if he goes to the ward-mote to receive it, and has to wait perhaps some time for the distribution, what may not have become of his darling “Pot” during his absence ? Acute critics have said, apparently with truth, that in Euclio we have the pure miser ; who has no desire to increase his store, no actual pleasure in the possession, no sense of latent power in the gold which he treasures, but who is a very slave to it in the terror of losing it.

Euclio, though much alarmed at first as to the probable motives of Megadorus's request, consents to give him his daughter ; still, however, under protest that he is a very poor man, which the other fully believes. He can give no dowry with her : but Megadorus is

prepared to take her without ; he will even provide out of his own purse all the expenses of the wedding-feast, and will send in to Euclio's house both the provisions and the cooks required for the occasion.

But the cooks, when they come, and begin to busy themselves in the house, are a source of continual agony to the miser. He hears one of them call for a "larger pot :" and he rushes at once to the protection of his gold. He finds his own dunghill-cock scratching about the house ; and he is sure that these new-comers have trained him to discover the buried treasure, and knocks the poor bird's head off in his fury. In the end he drives them all off the premises under a shower of blows, and only when he has in their absence dug up the precious pot, and got it safe under his cloak, will he allow them to come back again. When the bridegroom expectant, in the joy of his heart, invites him to drink with him, he feels satisfied that his intention is to make him drunk, and so to wring from him his secret.

The miser carries off the pot, and proceeds to bury it afresh in the temple of Faith, placing it under that goddess's protection. He finds that this proceeding has been watched by a slave belonging to Megadorus, and carries the gold off again to the sacred grove of Sylvanus, where he buries it once more. This time, however, the slave takes his measures successfully, by getting up into a tree ; and when Euclio is gone, he unearths the pot, and carries it off rejoicing. The discovery of his loss almost drives the miser frantic : and the scene is worth extracting, if only because Molière has borrowed it almost entire in the well-known soliloquy of Harpa-

gon in 'L'Avare.' It shall be given in as literal a prose version as it will bear, in order to its more ready comparison with the French imitation.

EUCLIO (*solus, rushing on the stage*).

I'm ruined ! dead ! murdered !—where shall I run ? Where shall I not run to ? Stop him there, stop him !—Stop whom ! Who's to stop him ? (*Striking his forehead in despair.*) I can't tell—I can see nothing—I'm going blind. Where I'm going, or where I am, or who I am, I cannot for my life be sure of ! (*Wringing his hands, and appealing to the audience.*) Oh pray—I beseech you, help me ! I implore you, do ! Show me the man that stole it ! Ah ! people put on respectable clothes, and sit there as if they were all honest ! (*Addressing a spectator in the front seats.*) What did you say, sir ? I can believe you, I'm sure—I can see from your looks you're an honest man. (*Looking round on them all.*) What is it ? Why do you all laugh ? Ah, I know you all ! There are thieves here, I know, in plenty ! Eh ! have none of them got it ? I'm a dead man ! Tell me then, who's got it ?—You don't know ? Oh, wretch, wretch that I am ! utterly lost and ruined ! Never was man in such miserable plight. Oh, what groans, what horrible anguish this day has brought me ! Poverty and hunger ! I'm the most unhappy man on earth. For what use is life to me, when I have lost all my gold ? And I kept it so carefully !—Pinched myself, starved myself, denied myself in everything ! And now others are making merry over it,—mocking at my loss and my misery ! I cannot bear it !

—Act v. sc. 2.*

The scene which follows between the miser and the

* Compare Molière's 'L'Avare,' act iv. sc. 7.

young man Lyconides, who has anticipated his uncle in the love of the miser's daughter, has also been borrowed by Molière. Lyconides comes to confess that he has stolen the young lady's affections ; but Euclio is so full of his one great loss, that he persists in interpreting all Lyconides's somewhat incoherent language to imply that he is the thief of the gold. The play upon the Latin word *olla*, which means "pot," and is also the old form of *illa*, "she," helps the *equivoque* materially. But the French version is far more amusing ; and the words of Harpagon, when, in reply to Valère's talk about "la passion que ses beaux yeux m'ont inspirée, he exclaims in bewilderment, "Les beaux yeux de ma cassette !" * has passed, like so many of Molière's lines, into a favourite proverb.

This play is imperfect, and we only know what the catastrophe was from the brief sketch in the metrical prologue, which Priscian the grammarian is said to have affixed to each of these comedies. The lover recovers the pot of gold for its owner ; and—by some miraculous change in the miser's nature—is presented with it as a dowry for the daughter. The later scenes have indeed been supplied by more than one ingenious "restorer ;" but such restorations are unsatisfactory at the best.

Besides the admirable adaptation of this comedy in the French, no less than three English dramatists, Fielding, Shadwell, and Wycherley, have each a comedy called 'The Miser,' the plot and materials of all which are borrowed more or less from Plautus.

* 'L'Avare,' act v. sc. 1.

IX.—THE TRICKSTER (PSEUDOLUS).

This comedy would deserve special notice, if only because it was, if we may trust Cicero, the “darling” of Plautus. An author, however, is not an infallible judge of his own works ; and though the action of the piece is very busy and lively, and the tricks of Pseudolus fairly amusing, few modern readers would be likely to select it as their favourite. Probably it might act better than it reads. Its plot is the old story of money which has to be raised in some way for the ransom of a slave-girl out of the hands of the dealer, and the humour consists entirely in the devices of Pseudolus to procure it for his young master. But one of the early scenes contains such a graphic picture of one of these hateful traffickers in human flesh and blood, that portions of it may be worth presenting to the reader.

Enter BALLIO, the slave-dealer, and four flogging-slaves, all armed with whips : other slaves following.

Come out, here ! move ! stir about, ye idle rascals !
The very worst bargain that man ever made,
Not worth your keep ! There's ne'er a one of ye
That has thought of doing honest work.
I shall never get money's worth out of your hides,
Unless it be in this sort (*lays about them with the whip*).
Such tough hides too !
Their ribs have no more feeling than an ass's—
You'll hurt yourself long before you'll hurt them.
And this is all their plan—these whipping-posts—
The moment they've a chance, it's pilfer, plunder,
Rob, cheat, eat, drink, and run away's the word.

That's all they'll do. You'd better leave a wolf
 To keep the sheep, than trust a house to them.
 Yet, now, to look at 'em, they're not amiss ;
 They're all so cursedly deceitful.—Now—look here ;
 Mind what I say, the lot of ye ; unless
 You all get rid of these curst sleepy ways,
 Dawdling and maundering there, I'll mark your backs
 In a very particular and curious pattern—
 With as many stripes as a Campanian quilt,
 And as many colours as an Egyptian carpet.
 I warned you yesterday ; you'd each your work ;
 But you're such a cursed,—idle,—mischievous crew—(*gives
 one of them a cut at each word*)

That I'm obliged to let you have this as a memorandum.
 Oh ! that's your game, then, is it ? So you think
 Your ribs are as hard as this is ? (*Shows his whip.*) Now,
 just look !

(*Turning to his whipping-slaves.*) They're minding some-
 thing else ! Attend to this,

(*Striking one of the others.*) Mind this, now, will you ?
 Listen, while I speak,

You generation that were born for flogging ;
 D'ye think your backs are tougher than this oow-hide ?
 (*Lays about him with it.*) Why, what's the matter ? Does
 it hurt ? O dear !—

That's what slaves get when they won't mind their masters.

—Act i. sc. 2.

There was a highly comic element in this, we may be sure, to an audience of Roman freemen. Even if there were, as it is certain there must have been, present in the theatre, many who had been slaves themselves, and whose fathers had been in slavery, and many who were slaves still, we may feel only too sure that their laugh was amongst the loudest. Among the curses of modern

slavery has been the selfish disregard of human suffering which it encouraged not only amongst the masters but amongst the slaves themselves ; and it is well known that a negro overseer has often shown far more cruelty towards those of his own colour than the white owner of the plantation.

The slave Pseudolus, who is the hero of this piece, and from whom Molière seems to have borrowed in some degree his character of Mascarille in ‘L’Etourdi,’ is somewhat of a more intellectual rascal than others of his type who appear in these comedies. He looks upon successful roguery as a highly intellectual accomplishment.

Just as the poet, when he takes his pen,
Seeks things which upon earth have no existence,
And straightway finds them, and makes that like truth
Which is but very falsehood ; thus will I
In my way be a poet ; these gold pieces
Which are not, shall be ; genius shall create them.

The scene in which he meets his master Simo, who is looking for him in order to make some inquiries as to the late discreditable goings-on of his son, in which he thinks with some justice that Pseudolus has been aiding and abetting, is a good specimen of cool effrontery. Simo is accompanied by his friend Callipho, and Pseudolus sees them coming.

Pseudolus (to himself). A bold behaviour in a doubtful cause
Is half the victory. (*Bowing profoundly to Simo.*) Sir,
my best respects—

They are my master's due. (*Bowing to Callipho.*) My second best,

Such as are left me, sir, I offer you.

Simō (*gruffly*). Good morning. Where may you be going, eh ?

Pseud. I'm standing still, sir, as you might observe (*striking an attitude*).

Si. Look at the fellow's posture, Callipho !
Stands like a lord there !

Callipho. Well, he's not afraid ;
That's a good sign.

Pseud. I hold, sir, that the slave
Who has an honest conscience (*lays his hand on his heart*)
should feel proud,
Especially in the presence of his master.

Si. Hark to him ! Now he'll so philosophise,
And choke you with a flood of clever words,
You'd think he was not Pseudolus, but Socrates.*

Pseud. You hold me in contempt, sir—that I know ;
You do not trust me ; ah ! you'd have me be
A rascal ; no, sir—I'll be honest still.

—Act i. sc. 5.

His master asks him whether he can answer honestly a few questions about his son : and Pseudolus assures him that his replies shall be “as the oracles of Delphi.” His son has got into trouble ? Yes. Owes money ? Yes. He, Pseudolus, is trying to procure it for him ? Yes. Probably intending, by some tricks or cajolery, to extract it out of his—the father’s—pocket ? Pseudolus confesses that he had such intention. And, after

* This reputation for “sophistry” seems to have followed Socrates from the pages of Aristophanes to those of his brother dramatist.

some satirical compliment from Simo upon his candour, and thanks for having thus put him on his guard, he coolly assures his master that he retains this intention still, and is confident of succeeding in it. Nay, more —when Simo challenges him to try, he will undertake not only to get from him the money required for the ransom of the young person upon whom his son has set his heart, but to get her away from her present owner without any ransom at all. It ends in a promise from Simo to make him a present of the sum required, if he succeeds in his design upon Ballio the slave-dealer. The old gentleman, however, gets so uneasy on the subject, that he succeeds in “ hedging ” his own stake in the matter by telling Ballio of the plot which is laid for him, and making a wager with him to the same amount that Pseudolus will beat him in spite of all precautions. He does ; and his master—who is evidently as proud of possessing such a clever slave as some people are of a specially mischievous child —hands him over the money ; with the less reluctance, because he gets recouped at the expense of the wretched Ballio, who loses both his slave and his wager. Pseudolus liberally offers to return his master half, if he will join him at a supper which he has ordered in celebration of his double triumph ; and Simo, in accordance with that curious combination of familiarity and despotism which has been remarked as pervading all the relations between master and slave, accepts the invitation at once, although Pseudolus is very far from sober when he gives it. Simo suggests that he should also invite the audience ; but Pseudolus replies that none of them have ever yet invited *him*. If, however, they will now sig-

nify their approval of the comedy, he will give them an invitation—to-morrow.

The plays named ‘*Epidicus*’ and ‘*Bacchides*’ both turn upon incidents very similar to the preceding, the clever and unscrupulous slave being the leading character in both. They call for no particular notice here; unless it be to mention that the ‘*Epidicus*’ must have been, like the play just noticed, a special favourite with its author, since he makes one of the characters in his ‘*Bacchides*’ say that he “loves it as well as his own life;” * and that this latter play, like the ‘*Pseudolus*,’ appears to have suggested to Molière some points in his ‘*L’Etourdi*.’ One of its scenes † has also (as Thornton thinks) been imitated by him in ‘*Les Fouiberies de Scapin*.’

X.—THE YOUNG CARTHAGINIAN (PŒNULUS).

This play has an interest apart from any literary merit, because, written as it was during the Second Punic War, it has some Carthaginians introduced into it. We may conclude that the sketches were such as Plautus judged likely to meet the popular taste; and if so, they are creditable to the Roman contemporary estimate of their powerful enemies. With the exception of a joke or two about long trailing foreign dresses, and their being “pulse-eaters,”—just as we used to affect to believe that Frenchmen lived upon frogs,—and a hit in the prologue at the proverbial “Punic faith,” which on a Roman’s tongue meant Punic faithlessness, there is nothing derogatory to their national character

* Bacch., act ii. sc. 2.

† Act iii. sc. 3.

in this impersonation of the Carthaginians by the Roman dramatist. The elder of the two, who is introduced under a very historical name—Hanno—is a highly straightforward and unselfish character, who at once gives up to his cousin, Agorastocles, the “young Carthaginian,” as soon as he discovers their relationship, the property which had been left to himself by the young man’s father, in the belief of his son’s death. Agorastocles himself is neither better nor worse than the Athenian (or, as they really are, Roman) youths who figure in the comedies. And as for Adelphasium—Hanno’s lost daughter, with whom the hero of the piece has fallen passionately in love in her position as a slave—there is more character in her than in any one of the heroines (the word must be used because there is no other to be found) of Plautus or of Terence. It is difficult to separate her from the very disagreeable interlocutors in the dialogues in which she takes a part: but the quiet way in which she treats her sister’s love of finery, and her half-affected indifference to the flatteries of her lover, and disregard of all his raptures so long as he fails in his promise of obtaining her freedom, mark her out very distinctly from most of the female characters in Plautus. There is an amusing scene in which her lover, finding that she will not listen to him, begs his servant Milphio, in whose rhetorical powers he feels more confidence, to plead his cause with her. Milphio consents to do it—warning his master, at the same time, that he may possibly think his ambassador too energetic. So the young man listens in the background, while Milphio, speaking on his behalf, entreats Adelphasium, in the most approved style of lovers’

language, to have some pity upon his unfortunate master. He throws himself so heartily into his commission, that the Carthaginian listens to his rapturous expressions with dismay, and at last can endure it no longer. He rushes forward, and seizes his ambassador by the collar, wholly regardless of the presence of the lady and her sister, who look on with much amusement.

Agorastocles. Now am I not worth purchase at three farthings,

If I don't break that scoundrel's head.—Come here, sir !
(*seizes Milphio.*)

There's for your "sweets,"—and "dears,"—and "pretty darlings"—(*beats him at each word*).

Here's "heart's delight" and "lovely charmer" for you !
(*beats him again.*)

Milphio. Oh, master, master ! it's rank sacrilege ! You're beating an ambassador !

Agor. I'll beat him
More yet.—"Kiss her all day," sir, could you ?
I daresay ! (*striking him again.*) "Nestling of your bosom," is she ?

Mil. (*roaring and rubbing his shoulders*). Oh ! that's enough !

Agor. Was that the fashion, sirrah,
In which I meant you to address the lady ?

Mil. Why, what was I to say, then ?
Agor. Say, you rascal ?
Why, this—"Light of my master's eyes—queen of *his* soul—

Breath of *his* life—joy of *his* heart,"—and so on :
Instead of that, sir, in your cursed impudence,
You've been calling her *your* darling all the time !

Mil. Oh ! now I see ! (*goes up to Adelphasium, and begins again.*)

I implore you, gracious madam,—
 Joy of *his* heart—but *my* abomination—
 Queen of *his* soul—but enemy of my ribs—
 His pet, my pest—his angel, but my devil—
 Light of his eyes—but black as night to me—
 Don't be so very cross to him,—if you can help it.

Adelphasium (*laughing and turning away*). Go hang
 yourself! you and your master too!

Mil. I shall lead a precious life of it, I see, through you;
 I've got a back already in your service
 Whealed like an oyster-shell.

Adel. It's your own back
 That you think most of, I suspect; not him,
 Or how he cheats me with deceitful promises.

When Hanno has discovered that these two sisters are the long-lost daughters in search of whom he has journeyed to Calydon, he determines to play upon their feelings for a while—in the most unnecessary and unlikely fashion—by pretending to them that he merely comes to claim them as his slaves. And here, again, there are little touches on the part of Adelphasium which almost redeem the scene from tediousness. Hanno pretends to summon the girls before the magistrate, in order to prove his claim; and the lover, who is present, and helps (though with evident impatience) to humour the father's jest, asks him if he shall at once make Adelphasium *his* prisoner. She has heard him address the stranger as his “cousin;” and the fine scorn with which, as she draws back from his eager arm, she exclaims—

“Said you this person was your kinsman, sir?”
 could not fail to be effective from the lips of a clever

actress. So, too, when she requests to know the nature of Hanno's claim to her, and the lover, eager to put an end to the *equivoque*, says that all shall be told if she will but accompany the stranger, she scornfully replies—

“What! does my own dog bark at me?”

it is not difficult to sympathise with the young Carthaginian's intense admiration of her as she stands there defying him. He vows that for her sake Jupiter would soon “send Juno packing;” and when at last she throws her arms round her father's neck, he laments that Apelles and Zeuxis died too soon—they had never such a subject for their pencil. These are by far the most life-like pair of lovers in any comedy of either Plautus or Terence. Granted that he is a little foolish, and she something of a coquette,—that does not make the characters either less natural or less entertaining.

Nevertheless, all this absurd mystification on the part of the father does make this scene tedious, as are some others in the play. Hanno carries on his heavy joke so long, that at last his young cousin, who is impatient for the recognition of his dear Adelphasium, appeals to him by pointing to the audience:—

“Sir, cut it short—these gentlemen are thirsty.”

There is no symptom of relenting disclosed on the part of Adelphasium towards her suitor, even after her true position as a free-woman has been secured; but, as Hanno unhesitatingly promises her hand in marriage to her new-found cousin, and daughters in the comic

drama are very dutiful on such points, we are left to conclude that his constancy is rewarded. Mr Dunlop—whose critical judgment is entitled to so much respect—has pronounced this to be the dullest of all the author's productions. Plot there certainly is none ; and the heavy badinage of the excellent Hanno is enough to put any critic out of temper. But there is certainly more point in the dialogue than in most of the comedies of Plautus.

The play has a special interest for scholars, independently of any literary merit. It is supposed to contain the only existing specimen of the Carthaginian language, in which Hanno is made to speak when first he appears upon the stage.* There are eighteen lines of it (some of them, however, containing a mixture of Latin words), besides a few scattered phrases. This philological curiosity has naturally much exercised the ingenuity of the learned. Scaliger, Petit, and others, consider the language to be merely a variation of Hebrew, and in Pareus's edition of Plautus the lines are printed in Hebrew characters. Others have sought to identify it with Chinese, Persian, or Coptic. Some modern philologists incline to consider it a mere unmeaning jargon, invented by Plautus for the occasion ; and the frequent admixture of Latin words and terminations in the last lines of the passage (as though the writer were tired of keeping up the farce) certainly lends some countenance to this view. The vocalisation of some of the words bears no slight resemblance to

* Act v. sc. 1.

Welsh. But the question of the affinities of language is not one to be discussed here.

The remaining Comedies may be dismissed with brief notice. The stock characters—the parasite, the military swaggerer, and the cunning slave—reappear upon the stage in very similar combinations, and in less respectable company. ‘Stichus,’ which is in other respects deficient in interest, having no plot whatever, and which some authorities do not consider to have been written by Plautus, deserves notice as containing the pretty female character of Pamphila (or Pinacium, as she is called in some copies), the exemplary young wife who maintains her fidelity to her absent husband in spite of the strong probabilities of his death or desertion. In vain has her father urged upon her and his other daughter, in accordance, no doubt, with the feeling of society on such points, the propriety of unprotected young women in their circumstances marrying again. Their husbands have now been absent, ostensibly on a trading voyage, for above three years, and have sent no word home. But Pamphila will listen to no such suggestion, and encourages her sister in steady resistance to all temptations to such breach of their first vows. Of course both husbands return home in due time, enriched by the profits made in their foreign voyages ; and such is the whole story of this brief and inartistic drama, remarkable only for its pleasant companion pictures of the two young wives. Six more plays make up the list of Plautus’s surviving comedies, and if

these had not survived, we should certainly have had no loss. Their names are ‘Casina’—which seems to have furnished Beaumarchais with part of the plot of his ‘Mariage de Figaro’—‘Curculio,’ ‘The Ass-dealer’ (*Asinaria*), ‘The Churl’ (*Truculentus*), ‘The Merchant,’ and ‘The Persian.’ The morality of all these is of the very lowest, and the three last are stupid besides.

CHAPTER V.

TERENCE.

A DRAMATIC generation elapsed between Plautus and Terence ; for the latter was only ten years old at the date of Plautus's death. The great name which filled the interval in the annals of Roman comedy was that of Cæcilius ; but of his works nothing remains except a few disjointed passages to be found here and there in the works of other authors. Horace mentions him with approval, while Cicero accuses him of bad Latin. Cæcilius, too, was a copyist from Menander, and a very indifferent copyist in the opinion of Aulus Gellius, who gives us an additional testimony to the genius of the Greek dramatist, when, in comparing a passage from one of his lost comedies with the imitation of it by Cæcilius, he says that the difference in brilliancy is that of the golden armour of Glaucon compared with the bronze of Diomed.

Such biographical record as we have of Terence is mainly derived from a source which is very apocryphal. There is a “Life” of him, ascribed to Suetonius, but more probably written by the grammarian Donatus : we do not know what authority the

writer had for his details, and the anecdotes which it contains have a suspicious colouring.

Though the name by which he is known—Publius Terentius—is Roman, we are told that he was by birth a Carthaginian, whence came his *sobriquet* of “Afer” (the African), and that he was either born in slavery or had become a prisoner of war. He was brought up in the household of a Roman senator named Terentius, and, as was not uncommon among slaves when they obtained their freedom, took the name of his patron. That under these circumstances he should have had a liberal education need not discredit the story ; for in many Roman families we know that such young slaves as showed ability were allowed ample opportunities of instruction. But other opportunities are said to have fallen to the lot of Terence such as few in his position could have hoped for. He was admitted, while yet a young man, to an intimate association with Scipio and Lælius ; and this pair of accomplished friends were even said to have had a large share in the composition of the dramas which were brought out in the name of their humbler associate. There is a story that Lælius, being one evening busy in his library, and slow to obey his wife's summons to dinner, excused himself by saying he had never been in a happier mood for composition : and forthwith recited, as part of the result, a passage from what was afterwards known as ‘The Self-Tormentor’ of Terence. The dramatist himself, perhaps very naturally, seems partly to have encouraged the popular notion that he enjoyed such distinguished help ; for though in his prologue to the comedy which

was said to have been really the work of his aristocratic friend he speaks of this report as “a weak invention of the enemy,” yet in the prologue to a subsequent drama, ‘The Brothers,’ he evidently treats it as a compliment, and does not care altogether to refute so flattering an accusation.

For as to that which carping tongues report,
That certain noble friends have lent their hand
To this his work, and shared the poet’s toil,—
What they would fling at him as a reproach
He counts an honour,—to be thus approved
By those whom universal Rome approves.*

Cicero thought it probable that his illustrious friends did help him, though it might have been only by judicious hints and corrections. It is also more than possible that the dramatist may have been indebted for much of the refinement of his dialogue, directly or indirectly, to the accomplished women whose society he enjoyed in the household of Lælius. The ladies of that family were all charming talkers; and Lælia, the eldest daughter of Scipio’s friend, is mentioned by her son-in-law Crassus, the famous orator, as reminding him, in the elegance of her language, of the dialogues of Nævius and Plautus.

It is said that when he offered his first play to the *Ædiles*, who as the regulators of the public games had to choose the pieces which were to enjoy the honour of public representation, he found the officer to whom he brought it to read seated at table. The young author was desired to take a stool at a distance, and begin: but he had scarcely got through the opening passage

* Prologue to the *Adelphi*, 15.

of ‘The Maid of Andros’ when the *Ædile* motioned him to a seat by his own side, and there the reading was completed.

The six comedies which follow are probably all that their author ever put upon the stage. In the midst of his dramatic career, he left Rome in order to travel in Greece, and is said during his tour to have employed himself in the translation of upwards of a hundred of Menander’s comedies. He seems never to have returned, and tradition says that he was lost at sea on his voyage homeward, and that his precious manuscripts perished with him. Another story is that he himself escaped from the wreck, but died of grief for the loss of his literary treasures.

His plays have far more elegance, but less action, than those of Plautus. He is perhaps more adapted for the library, and Plautus for the stage. Very much of the fun of the latter is broad farce, while Terence seldom descends below parlour comedy. But the two writers had moved in very different circles : Plautus had been familiar with life in the Suburra—the St Giles’s of Rome—while Terence had mixed in the society of the Palatine. Their tastes had thus been formed in very different schools. It is probable that Terence gives us a better notion of what Menander was than either Plautus or Cæcilius. A criticism of Cæsar has been already quoted, in which he calls Terence a “half-Menander.” In the same lines he speaks of his “pure diction” and “smoothness,” and regrets his deficiency in that lively humour (“*vis comica*”) which Menander seems to have succeeded in combining with

the Attic elegance of his style. There seems much justice in this criticism.

The brief prologues with which Terence introduces his plays, unlike those of Plautus, contain no kind of explanation of the plot. They are personal appeals of the poet to his audience, informing them honestly of the sources from which he has borrowed his piece (for to the honours of original invention no Roman dramatist of those days seems to have thought of aspiring), or defending himself against some charge of unfair dealing brought against him by his rivals. In this respect they bear a strong resemblance to the "parabasis," as it was called, introduced here and there between what we should call the acts, in the old Attic Comedy of Aristophanes and Cratinus.

CHAPTER VI.

THE COMEDIES OF TERENCE.

I.—THE MAID OF ANDROS.

'THE Maid of Andros'—the earliest in date of Terence's comedies with which we are acquainted—is confessedly founded upon two plays of Menander, his 'Andria' and 'Perinthia ;' and the Roman dramatist tells us, in his prologue, how certain critics complained that in this adaptation he had spoilt two good pieces to make a single indifferent one. How much truth there may be in the accusation we cannot even guess. But there seems to have been generally a lack of incident in the comedies of his great original, which, supposing such adaptation to be permissible at all, would quite justify a writer who had to make his own work effective in supplying himself with sufficient material from as many separate pieces as he thought proper. Even as we have the play, the incidents are so few and simple, that its defect, if acted before a modern audience, would be the want of sufficient interest in the plot. A lady named Chrysis has come from the island of Andros to Athens, and there, from lack of money or friends, after

a hard struggle to make an honest livelihood, has been driven to make a market of her beauty. Amongst the visitors to her house, one of the most constant has been the young Pamphilus, who may be considered the hero of the piece. But, whatever the lady's reputation, the relations between her and Pamphilus have been of the most innocent kind : and of this fact none are better convinced than his father Simo, and the freedman Sosia—who is, in spite of his humble position in the household, the confidential friend and adviser of both father and son. The scene between Sosia and his master gives us, as most of these comedies do, a very pleasant idea of the kindly relations which in a well-regulated Roman household might subsist between the head of the family and his dependants, even under the hateful conditions of slavery. For we must still remember that, though the scene is laid in Athens, the words, and in a great degree the manners also, are Roman ; though Terence is more careful on this point than Plautus. Simo tells his freedman that he wants his services in a matter which involves trust and secrecy —qualities in which he has not hitherto found him wanting.

Simo. You know that, since I bought you when a boy,
You found me as a master just and kind ;
Then from a slave I made you free ; and this
Because you had served me with a free goodwill ;
The greatest boon I had to give, I gave you.

Sosia. I don't forget it.

Si. Nor do I repent it.

So. If aught that I have done, or can do, pleases you,
It is my pleasure : if you thank me for it,

I thank you for the thanks. But that you name it
Troubles me somewhat; thus reminding me
Seems half to charge me with ingratitude;—
Sir, in one word, what would you have me do?

Simo will tell him. It was true,—there was nothing between his son and Chrysis; his visits were really not to her. But Chrysis died a short time ago; and Pamphilus, as a mark of respect to an old acquaintance, had followed amongst the mourners at her funeral. Simo—one of the many idle old gentlemen who were wont to be spectators on such occasions—had seen his son actually wipe away a tear. He was charmed, he tells Sosia, at such a mark of true sensibility. “If he weeps, said I to myself, for a person who was a mere common acquaintance, what would he not do for me—his father!” Suddenly a young woman, hitherto unknown, attracted his attention: of such a ravishing beauty that the staid father of the family grows positively enthusiastic—rather to the surprise of the discreet Sosia—in his description. When the corpse is laid, according to Athenian custom, on the funeral pile, this interesting young stranger, in the agony of her grief, crept so close to it as to be almost caught by the flames; when a young man rushed forward, clasped her in his arms with the tenderest expressions of affection, calling her his “darling Glycerium,” and led her off sobbing very familiarly on his shoulder—quite as if she was used to the situation. And this young man was Pamphilus—and his father looking on with his own eyes! He had gone home, as he tells Sosia, in such mood as might be imagined after witnessing this outrageous conduct in

the promised bridegroom of his old friend's daughter.
Yet, after all, he continues—

I had scarce ground enough, methinks, to chide him ;
He might reply—"Have I deserved this, father ?
What have I done ? Wherein have I offended ?
She would have thrown herself into the flames ;
I hindered it—I saved her life !"—Such plea
Sounds fair and honest.

So. Marry, so it does ;
For if you chide him that would save a life,
What will you say to him that seeks to take it ?

However, the father is in great tribulation. His friend Chremes has heard of the matter, and is told that Pamphilus is privately married to this young foreigner ; and very naturally declines any longer to look upon him as a future son-in-law. But Simo is determined to find out the truth, and to be satisfied whether his son has really got into this disreputable entanglement. He means to pretend to him that the marriage with Chremes's daughter, so long meditated, is at last finally settled, and is to come off at once, this very evening, the day originally named. Young men in Athenian society must have been usually very obedient to their fathers in such matters : for Simo has no doubt of his son's compliance, unless he can show good and reasonable cause to the contrary. If this Andrian girl really stands in the way, Pamphilus will make decided objections to the being disposed of in marriage, and then—then, this indulgent father, who evidently dreads nothing so much as having to find fault with his son at all, will know how to deal with him. So Sosia is

charged to keep up the deception, and to assure every one that his young master is to be married this very evening.

But, if Sosia justly enjoys the confidence of his master, the young heir of the house has his confidant too. This is a slave named Davus—the best-known representative in classical comedy of the familiar character who has been described in a previous chapter.* He has considerably more cleverness than Sosia, but nothing of his honesty: except, indeed, a kind of spaniel-like fidelity to his young master's private interests, partly attributable to the mischievous pleasure which he finds in thereby thwarting the plans and wishes of the elder one. Davus has heard of this sudden renewal of the marriage-contract, and comes upon the stage soliloquising as to how this complication is to be dealt with. His master enters at the same time on the other side, listening.

Davus. Ah ! I was wondering where all this would end!
 The master was so quiet, I suspected
 He must mean mischief. When he heard that Chremes
 Downright refused his girl, he never spoke
 An angry word, nor stormed at any of us.

Simo. (aside at the wing, shaking his stick at Davus).
 He will speak soon, and to your cost, you rascal !
Da. (still aside). So, so ! he thought to take us unprepared,
 Lapping us up in this fools' Paradise,
 To swoop upon us at the last, too late
 To give us time to think, or opportunity
 To hinder this curst wedding. (*Ironically.*) Clever man !
Si. (trying to listen). What is he muttering ?

* See p. 15.

Da. (*discovering Simo*). Ha ! my master there !
 I had not seen him.
Si. (*coming forward*). Davus !
Da. (*pretending not to have seen him before*). Hey ? what is it ?
Si. Here, sirrah, come this way !
Da. (*aside*). What can he want ?
Si. What say you ?
Da. What about ?
Si. D'ye ask me, sirrah ?—
 They say my son has a love affair !
Da. Good luck !
 How folks will talk !
Si. D'ye mind me, sir, or no ?
Da. I'm all attention.
Si. Well—to inquire too closely
 Into the past were harsh—let bygones rest.
 But now he must begin a different life ;
 New duties lie before him from this day :
 And you—I charge you (*changing his tone*)—nay, indeed,
 good Davus,
 I rather would intreat you, if I may,
 Pray help to keep him straight.
Da. (*affecting surprise*). Why—what's all this ?
Si. Young men, you know, with such whims, do not care
 To have a wife assigned them.
Da. (*carelessly*). So they say.
Si. Then—if a young man have a knavish tutor
 Who trains him in such courses, why, the evil
 Will grow from bad to worse.
Da. (*looking stolid*). Hercules help me !
 I can't tell what you mean.
Si. (*ironically*). No—really ?
Da. No ;
 I'm only Davus—I'm no Oedipus.
Si. You'd have me speak more plainly—is it so ?

Da. Indeed I would.

Si. Then, if I catch you scheming
To disappoint this match of ours to-day,
By way of showing your own curst cleverness,
I'll have you flogged within an inch of life,
And sent to the mill—on this condition, look you—
When I let you out, I'll go and grind myself.
Now, sir, d'ye understand me ? Is that plain ?

Da. Oh, perfectly ! (*bowing*). You state the case so
clearly,
With such entire correctness of expression,
So free from ambiguity—it's quite charming !

But Davus is not deterred by these threats. He meets Chremes going about with a very gloomy face, not at all like a happy father-in-law : he meets his foot-boy coming home from market with a penny bundle of pot-herbs and a dish of sprats—very unlike provisions for a wedding-supper. He peeps into their kitchen ; no culinary preparations whatever. Moreover, there is no music, as there should be, before the door of the bride's house. He is satisfied that his suspicions are correct ; that there is really no wedding on foot, at least for the present ; that Chremes still firmly refuses to allow his daughter to marry a young man whom he believes to be married already ; and that Simo is only using this pretended renewal of the engagement as a test for ascertaining how matters really stand between his son and the fair Andrian. He goes in search of his young master to acquaint him with this discovery, and to advise him to checkmate his father by consenting at once to the proposed marriage ; which, as there is no bride forthcoming, will

evidently pose the old gentleman considerably, besides convincing him that his son is free from the entanglement which he suspects. There will be a respite gained, at any rate : and in the meanwhile, Davus hopes,—“ something will turn up.”

He finds Pamphilus in a state of great perplexity, and very indignant against his father for proposing to marry him off-hand at such very short notice ; the perplexity not being lessened by his Glycerium presenting him with a baby on this his wedding-day that is to be with another lady. Simo has heard a report of this little stranger's arrival : but he believes it to be a mere plot to impose upon him and Chremes, and to confirm his friend in his resolution to refuse his daughter.

Acting upon the advice of Davus, Pamphilus assures his father at their next interview that he is quite ready to take the wife suggested to him. But Davus has been too clever by half. Simo goes straight to his friend, assures him that all is over between Pamphilus and Glycerium, that his son will gladly fulfil the contract already made for him, and begs of him, by their long friendship, not to refuse any longer a connection which will be for his son's advantage and for the happiness of all. Chremes with some reluctance consents : and in the joy of his heart Simo calls Davus, to whose good offices he thinks he is chiefly indebted for his son's compliance.

Simo. Davus, I do confess, I doubted you :
I had my fears ; slaves—common slaves, I mean—
Will do such things,—that you were cheating me,
As to this matter of my son's.

Davus. (with an air of injured innocence). I, master !
could you think it ? cheat ?—Oh dear !

Si. (soothingly). Well, well—I fancied so : and with
that thought

I kept the secret which I tell you now.

Da. What's that ?

Si. Well, you shall hear : for now at last
I almost think that I may trust you—may I ?

Da. At last, sir, it seems, sir, you appreciate me.

Si. This wedding was a mere pretence.

Da. (with feigned surprise). No ! really ?

Si. A scheme of mine, to test my son and you.

Da. Indeed !

Si. Yes, really.

Da. Look ye ! what a wit

Our master has ! I never could have guessed it.

Si. Listen ; when I dismissed you, I met Chremes—

Da. (aside.) We're lost—I know it.

Si. Listen ; straight I told him
What you told me, that Pamphilus was ready.

I begged and prayed that he would give his daughter ;
At last I moved him.

Da. (aside). Then I'm done for.

Si. Hey ! did you speak ?

Da. I only said “well done,” sir.

Si. And I beseech you, Davus, as you love me,
Since you alone have brought about this wedding—

Da. I ! oh dear, no ! pray—

Si. For my son I ask you,
Still do your best to regulate his morals.

Da. I will, I will, sir—trust me. [Exit Chremes.]

(Throws himself on the ground and tears his hair.)

O—h ! O—h !

I'm gone—a thing of nought. Why don't I go
Straight to the mill-prison of myself ?—Forgiveness ?
No hope of that, from any one. I've played

The very mischief with the total household ;
Cheated the master—got the son a wife—
This very night, much to the old gentleman's
Astonishment, and his son's disgust.—Ah ! well !
This comes of cleverness. Had I held my tongue,
No harm had happened.—Hist ! here comes young master ;
(*Looking about.*) Is there any place here high enough, I
wonder,
For a man to break his neck from ?

There is another lover in the plot,—which is perhaps to our modern notions more complicated than interesting. This daughter of Chremes, to whom Pamphilus has been contracted by his father, has a favoured admirer in his friend Charinus. Pamphilus has assured him that he himself has no aspirations whatever in that quarter, in spite of the arrangement between the two fathers : and the young lover is naturally indignant when he discovers, as he thinks, the treacherous part which his friend has played in the matter, in now coming forward to fulfil an engagement which he had always professed to repudiate. There is a spirited scene between the two young men, in which Pamphilus at last succeeds in convincing his friend of his own unchanged views in the matter—he will never marry the girl of his own free-will. Poor Davus narrowly escapes a thrashing from both, for his unlucky interference. He undertakes, however, if they will but have patience with him, to set matters right yet : and his next step is to persuade the nurse to allow him to lay Glycerium's baby down at his master's door—a silent claim upon his grandfather—just as Chremes, full of his daughter's marriage, is coming to call on his old friend. Chremes finds out

—as Davus intends that he should—whose child it is, and is more than ever indignant at the deception which is being repeated upon himself and his daughter. He goes straight to Simo and once more recalls his consent.

But meanwhile a stranger has arrived at Athens, who announces that this Andrian girl was really no sister of Chrysis, but a free-born daughter of Athenian parents, and that therefore Pamphilus will be bound by Athenian law to marry her—if they are not married already. When Davus comes to announce this news to Simo, the old gentleman's indignation at this new ruse on behalf of the conspirators—as he thinks it—knows no bounds ; and poor Davus, who is now speaking the truth for the first time in the whole business, is for his reward tied neck and heels by order of his irate master, and carried off to prison. But the tale is true. An Athenian citizen had been shipwrecked upon the island with a little child ; had died there, and left the infant to be brought up by Chrysis. This shipwrecked stranger turns out to have been Chremes's own brother, to whose charge he had committed his little daughter—this Glycerium, long supposed to be drowned, and now restored to her father. All difficulties are over ; Pamphilus shall yet be son-in-law to Chremes—only the bride is Glycerium, not Philumena. The latter young lady, who never makes her appearance, and whose charms, like those of Glycerium, must be taken on report by the audience, is with dramatic justice handed over to her lover Charinus. Davus is released ; he comes in rubbing his neck and legs, which are still suffering from the very uncomfortable kind of stocks—a veritable “*little-ease*”—which

the Romans used to punish their slaves, but too good-humoured and light-hearted not to rejoice in the restored harmony of the family. He concludes the piece by begging the audience not to expect an invitation to the weddings, which will take place, he assures them, quite privately.*

II.—THE MOTHER-IN-LAW.

The plot of ‘The Mother-in-law,’ though it is an extremely pretty play, and its moral excellent, turns upon incidents which would justly offend the reticence of modern manners. Here it can only be sketched generally. A young wife, but a few months married and of really irreproachable character, fancies that she has so fatally compromised herself with her husband under circumstances in which she was really not to blame, that in his absence she leaves the roof of his father and mother, with whom she has been living since her marriage, and takes refuge with her own parents. Laches, her father-in-law, a choleric and despotic personage, fancies that his wife Sostrata, the “mother-in-law,” must necessarily be the cause; although that gentle and kindly woman has really a sincere affection for the runaway, to whom she has always shown every kindness. The scolding which Laches inflicts upon his wife in one of the early scenes of the play, will serve to show how little originality

* Upon this play Michel Baron, the French dramatist, founded his comedy of ‘*I’Andrienne*,’ the two first acts being little more than a translation. Steele’s ‘Conscious Lovers’ is also borrowed from it.

there is in those conjugal dialogues which have always been so popular an ingredient in modern farce. If humour of this kind cannot be said to be in the very best taste, it may at least claim a high classical antiquity.

Laches. Good heavens ! what a strange race these women are !

They're all in a conspiracy ! all just alike,
In what they will and what they won't ; not one of 'em
But sings to the same note ; with one consent
Each stepmother detests her daughter-in-law,
Each wife is bound to contradict her husband ;
There must be some school where they all learn wicked-
ness ;

And my own wife must be head-mistress in it.

Sosrata. Poor me, poor me ! I don't know what I am charged with !

La. (sneering). Oh ! you don't, don't you ?

Sos. On my life, dear Laches,
No—as I hope to live and die with you !

La. The gods deliver me from such a prospect !

Sos. (sobbing). Well, when I'm gone, you'll know how cruel you've been.

La. Cruel, forsooth ! what words are strong enough
For your base conduct, madam ? You've disgraced
Me, and yourself, and all the family ;
You've ruined your son's happiness—made enemies
Of our best friends, who gave their daughter to us.
'Tis you, and only you, have done it all.

Sos. I !

La. Yes, you, madam ! What ! am I a stone ?
Have I no feelings, think you ? Do you fancy
Because I am in the country, I don't know
How you all go on here while I am away ?
Ay ! better than I know what goes on there.

Your conduct, madam, makes me common talk.
 I knew my son's wife hated you—yes, long ago ;
 No wonder—'twould be a wonder if she didn't.
 But that for your sake she had taken a hatred
 To the whole family,—this I did *not* know.
 Had I only known it, I'd have packed you off,
 And made her stay—I would indeed, my lady !
 Look how ungrateful, too, is this behaviour ;
 All to please you, I take a place in the country ;
 I work like a horse there—more than at my years
 I ought to do—to keep you here in idleness,
 Spending my money ; 'twas the very least
 You might have done, to keep a quiet house.

Sos. 'Twas not my fault, indeed, indeed, dear Laches !

La. I say it *was* your fault, and no one else's ;
 You'd nought to do but make things pleasant here ;
 I took all other burdens off your hands.
 Shame ! an old woman like you to go and quarrel
 With a poor girl !—You'll tell me now, 'twas her fault ?

Sos. No, no ! dear Laches, I have never said so.

La. Well, I am glad, for my son's sake, you've the grace
 To confess that. You don't much harm yourself
 By the confession ; in your precious character
 A fault or two the more don't make much odds.

You mothers never rest until your sons
 Get them a wife ; and then your whole delight
 Is to make mischief between wife and husband.

Some of the scenes in this play are the most dramatic of any which have come down to us from the author's hands. The grief of the young husband when, on his return from a voyage on business, he finds that his wife has left his father's roof and gone home to her own parents, and when she refuses him an

interview on the plea of illness ; when he believes that there is some cause of quarrel which is concealed from him between her and his mother, whom he dearly loves ; and the struggle between his love for his wife, and his sense of what is due to his own honour, when he learns the real cause of her withdrawal, are all very finely drawn. So are the little passages in which poor Sostrata, still believing that the cause of Philumena's estrangement is some unaccountable dislike which she has taken to herself, though conscious that she has done her best to make her a happy home, proposes to give up her pleasant town-house and retire into the country, and so leave the young pair to themselves. Laches himself is touched at last by her simple and unselfish goodness ; and though the indications of this are slight in the Roman play, compared with the fuller and more gradual development which would be thought necessary in a modern comedy, there is in the short scene between them a simple pathos which, when the characters were played by good actors, no doubt touched the feelings of the audience as it was meant to do.

La. Well, well ; we'll go into the country ; there You'll have to bear with me, and I with you.

Sos. (*throwing her arms round her husband and sobbing*). Husband, I hope we may !

La. (*disengaging himself awkwardly, and trying to hide his emotion*). There, there !—go in ; Get ready all you want—I've said the word.

Sos. I'll do your bidding—aye, and gladly.

Pamphilus (*who has entered unperceived*). Father !

La. Well, Pamphilus, what is it ?

Pam.

What means this ?

My mother leave her home ? It must not be.

La. Why not ?

Pam. Because I am not yet resolved
As to my wife.

La. You bring her back, of course.

Pam. I wish it—it is hard to give her up ;
But I must do that which I feel is best.
She and my mother will be friends—apart.

La. You can't tell that. Besides, what matters it ?
Your mother will be gone. (*Turns away from his son,*
who tries to interrupt him.) We're getting old—
We're only troublesome to younger folk ;
We'd best be moving on. (*Turning again to Pamphilus*
with a smile.) In short, my boy,
We're only "the old man and woman," now.

But everything is made right in the end. Philomena goes back to her husband a wife without reproach, and we are allowed to hope that Laches did not wait for Sostrata's death to repent of his injustice to her character. The dramatist had not altogether lost his pains, if he had done something to qualify the vulgar notion of a "mother-in-law." The play appears to have met with no success when first brought out, for it has come down to us with a "second prologue," written for what seems to have been its third representation, in which the author takes the opportunity to remark on its previous failures. He attributes these in both cases to the more powerful attractions of the rope-dancers and the gladiators. On the second occasion the audience were so impatient for the appearance of these latter, that they would not even sit out the comedy.

III.—THE SELF-TORMENTOR.

The comedy of ‘The Self-Tormentor’ is in great measure borrowed, as well as its Greek name of ‘Heauton-timorumenos,’ from a lost comedy of Menander, of which we have but some ten lines. It has very much the same kind of *dramatis personæ* as the preceding play. Two fathers and two sons,—a young lady for each, and a scheming slave, devoted to the interests of his young master—make up the leading characters. Chremes and Menedemus, the fathers, have for the last few months been neighbours in the country ; engaged, as Roman gentlemen who preferred a country life commonly were, in farming ; an occupation in which it must be confessed they were generally much more successful than the average English squire. Chremes has noticed that since Menedemus bought his present farm, he has worked upon it himself from morning till night, as hard as though he were a slave instead of a master ; in fact, that he does more work than any of his slaves, and that the time which he spends himself in manual labour might, so far as the interests of the farm are concerned, be much more profitably employed in looking after them. He has no reason to suppose that his neighbour is poor ; and he has a curiosity to learn the secret of this “self-tormenting.” He succeeds in doing so in the opening scene, though not without some difficulty. Menedemus gruffly expresses his surprise that his neighbour should have so much leisure from his own affairs as to concern himself about those of others.

Chremes makes answer in those famous words, which can only be inadequately given in any English translation ; words at which, as St Augustine tells us, the whole audience, though many of them rude and ignorant, broke out into thunders of applause :—

“ I am a man : nothing in human life
Can fail to have its interest for me.” *

Menedemus then tells him that he had once (he almost fears he can no longer say he has) an only son, who had fallen in love with a young Corinthian stranger of humble fortunes, who had come to Athens (the “Maid of Andros,” in fact, under another title), and had wished to marry her. The father’s pride had refused to consent ; almost any marriage with a foreigner was held, it must be remembered, to be a *mésalliance* for a citizen of Athens. He had spoken harshly to his son ; and the young man, not choosing to be so dealt with, had entered upon that field of adventure which was open in those times to all young men of spirit : he had taken service with a body of mercenaries, and gone to seek his fortunes in the East. Distracted at the consequences of his own severity, and the loss of a son whom he deeply loved, Menedemus had sold his house in Athens, and retired into the country, determined to punish himself for what he considers his unnatural harshness by a life of rigid asceticism. He will live no life of ease after driving his son into exile and poverty ; whatever he can save by self-denial shall

* “ Homo sum ; humani nihil a me alienum puto.”

be saved for him at his return—if ever that happy day should come.

It comes with the very next scene. Young Clinia has returned from the wars, and has just been received into the house of Chremes—introduced there by his son, Clitipho, who had been an intimate friend of the wanderer, though the father does not seem to have been aware of it. Clinia has begged his friend to send at once to his dear Antiphila, and,—if she has been as faithful to him in his absence as he hopes,—to entreat her to pay him a visit in his temporary domicile. And now the complication begins. Syrus,—the slave to whom young Clitipho intrusts his friend's errand, his confidant in all business, lawful or unlawful—determines to take the opportunity of doing his young master a special kindness. Clitipho has also, as Syrus is well aware, a love affair of his own upon his hands, with a very dashing and extravagant lady indeed, to gratify whose expensive tastes in the way of presents he has already taxed his father's good-nature to the uttermost. Syrus has hit upon the brilliant idea of introducing this lady into his master's household as a visitor, instead of the modest and quiet Antiphila, as the object of *Clinia's* affections ; that Clitipho may thus enjoy the pleasure of a few days in her society. Antiphila meanwhile is sent into the ladies' apartments—which were quite distinct from the other rooms in the house—there to be entertained by Sostrata, Chremes's wife. How Clinia is brought to consent to an arrangement which would give him very little opportunity for interviews with his dear Antiphila—or how husband and wife, in such a

modest establishment as this seems to have been, could each have entertained a young lady guest for some days (as seems to have been contemplated by Syrus) without each other's knowledge, is not so clear as it might be. But even on our modern stage we are continually obliged, if we go to be amused, to swallow glaring improbabilities ; and to expect to criticise the Athenian or the Roman stage by the light of our modern ignorance, is an occupation, perhaps, more tempting than profitable.

The hospitable Chremes is somewhat astonished at the ways of the dashing lady to whom—ail to oblige his son's friend—he has given shelter. He meets Menedemus the next morning, and warns him in a friendly way that Clinia's wife that is to be seems an extremely fast young person.

Chr. First, she's brought with her half a score of maids,
Tricked out, the jades, with gold and jewellery ;
Why, if her lover were an Eastern prince,
He couldn't stand it—how on earth can you ?

Men. (mildly). Oh ! is she here, too ?

Chr. Is she here, do you ask ?
(Ironically). Oh yes !—she's here. There's no doubt as
to that.

I know it to my cost. They've had one dinner,
She and her party. If I give another
Such as last night, why—I'm a ruined man.
She's very curious, mind you, as to her wines ;
Knows the best brands,—and drinks them. “Ha !”
she'd say,

“This wine's not dry enough, old gentleman—
“Get us some better, there's a dear old soul !”
I had to tap my oldest casks. My servants

Are driven almost wild. And this, remember,
Was but one evening. What's your son to do,
And you, my friend, that will have to keep her always ?

Men. Let him do what he will : let him take all,
Spend, squander it upon her ; I'm content,
So I may keep my son.

Chremes sees that it is impossible to argue with the remorseful father in these first moments of his son's return. But it will be a very dangerous thing for young Clinia to know that his father is thus offering him *carte blanche* for all his own and his mistress's extravagances. He therefore begs his friend, instead of openly supplying the money, to allow himself to be made the victim of a kind of pious fraud. The amount of expenditure for the present may not be of so much importance, provided the son is not led to believe that he has unlimited command of his father's purse. Chremes will manage that the supplies required for the lady's demands shall be drawn from Menedemus on some specious pretext. He has evidently a great fancy for transacting other people's business ; for though he has an arbitration case which he ought to attend to-day, he will go and have it put off, that he may have time to arrange this matter for his friend. The happy father willingly consents, and is all impatience to be cheated.

Syrus meanwhile is racking his wits to know how he is to get money for his young master to lavish upon the extravagant Bacchis. In this mood his elder master meets him ; and knowing him to possess the talent for intrigue and deception which is common to his class, asks his help to impose some tale upon

Menedemus—whom he affects to abuse as “a covetous old wretch”—in order to make him a little more liberal to his unfortunate son, whom he has once already driven from home by his harshness. “That poor young man ought to have had some clever servant,” says Chremes, “who would have managed the old gentleman for him.” Syrus is astonished, as he may well be, at such a proposal from such a quarter; but it suits his own purpose exactly.

Syr. Oh ! I can do it, sir, if you insist—I have, methinks, some modest gifts that way.

Chr. Egad ! so much the better.

Syr. I'm not used
To so much lying—but—

Chr. Do it—you'll oblige me.

Syr. But hark ye, sir, remember this, I pray you ;
In case—I say in case—men are but men—
Your son should get in some such scrape hereafter.

Chr. That case won't happen, I trust.

Syr. Nay, heavens forefend !
I trust so too. Don't think, because I mention it,
That I have any suspicion—not the slightest ;
But still—he's young, you see—such things will happen ;
And if they *should* (*bowing*), I shall know how to act,
By following your excellent instructions.

Chr. (*laughing*). Well, well ; we'll see to that, my
worthy Syrus,
When the day comes ; now go about this business.

[*Exit Chremes.*

Syr. I vow I never heard my master talk
More to the purpose—never had I before
Free leave and licence given to be a rascal !

The behaviour of his young guests is somewhat

puzzling to Chremes, though he is quite unsuspicuous as to the real state of affairs. Clinia and the supposed object of his affections conduct their love-passages in the most calm and decorous fashion ; but young Clitipho, to the great annoyance of his father, who understands what is right and proper under such circumstances, insists upon thrusting his company upon them on all occasions. He naturally grudges his friend all the *tête-à-têtes* with his own beloved Bacchis, which his good-natured father is so anxious to secure for them. Clinia does not seem to mind these interruptions on the part of his friend ; but Chremes is indignant at his son's want of ordinary tact and good manners, especially as he has detected little acts of glaring flirtation between him and Bacchis, which seem to imply gross disloyalty to his friend. He taxes him with this in an amusing scene, in the presence of Syrus, who is much alarmed lest his young master's want of self-command should lead to the detection of the imposture ; for he, too, has seen him very distinctly toying with Bacchis's hand. Both of them beg him to go and leave the young couple to themselves.

Clitipho (helplessly). Where shall I go, sir ?

Syrus. Go ? why, bless my life,
Go anywhere—only leave them—go for a walk.

Clit. Where shall I walk to ?

Syr. Zounds ! why, anywhere—
There's plenty of walks—go this way—that way—any
way.

Chremes. The man's quite right, sir,—go.

Clit. (moving off gloomily). Well, then—I'm going.

(Shaking his fist at Syrus as he goes.)

Devil take you, rascal, for your interference !

Syr. (aside to him). You keep your hands to yourself, young man, hereafter. (*Watching him as he goes off with apparent interest, and turning to Chremes.*)

Indeed, sir, he's too bad. What will he come to ?

You had best give him very serious warning,

And keep him tight in hand.

Chr. I will, I will.

Syr. Before it is too late.

Chr. I will, I say.

Syr. I hope you will, sir. As for my advice, (*Shrugging his shoulders.*) He minds it less and less, I grieve to say.

Chremes's wife has meanwhile made the discovery, by the common test of a family ring, that the girl Antiphila is a long-lost daughter whom she had sent away immediately after her birth, in obedience to her husband's threats that, in case one should be born to him, he would never bring up such a troublesome addition to his family. This, of course, makes everything clear for Clinia's marriage with her ; and that young gentleman is accordingly made happy, by the consent of all parties. But not before the busy Chremes has been hoisted with his own petard, by Syrus's contrivance. Acting very much upon the principle recommended to him by his master himself, the cunning rascal has extracted from him fifty pounds as an imaginary ransom for his own daughter Antiphila, whom he declares to have been purchased in her infancy by Bacchis : and the gold is actually sent to that lady by the hands of his own son. There is some complication in this part of the plot, fairly amusing as worked out

in detail in the original, but not worth analysis. It is very long before Chremes can be brought to believe that it is his own son, and not Clinia, who is the real lover of the dashing young lady whom he has been entertaining out of complaisance, as he considered, to his son's friend. Menedemus, no longer a "self-tormentor," is equally gratified to find that, after all, he is to have such a modest and highly respectable daughter-in-law, and amused at the collapse of his scheming friend.

MENEDEMUS (*solus, laughing to himself*).

I don't profess myself to be a genius—
I'm not so sharp as some folk—that I know :
But this same Chremes—this my monitor,
My would-be guide, philosopher, and friend,—
He beats me hollow. Blockhead, donkey, dolt,
Fool, leaden-brains, and all those pretty names—
They might suit *me*; to him they don't apply :
His monstrous folly wants a name to itself.

Poor Chremes grows very crestfallen in the closing scenes, when he looks forward to the ruin which his son's extravagant tastes, with the fair Bacchis's assistance, will bring upon him. Menedemus retorts upon him his own advice,—not to be too hard upon his son—young men will be young men: but Chremes fails to take the same philosophical view of his own case as he had done of his friend's. He vows at first that he will disinherit his young prodigal, and settle all his property upon his new-found daughter and her husband; but he is persuaded at last to alter this determination.

Clitipho promises on his part to give up Bacchis altogether, and take to wife at once a neighbour's daughter, a most unobjectionable young lady—upon whom, with the facile affections of such young gentlemen, he seems to have had an eye already.

IV.—THE ETHIOPIAN SLAVE.

The comedy of ‘The Ethiopian Slave,’ which is partly taken, as the author tells us in his prologue, from Menander, introduces to us once more, under another name, our old friend Pyrgopolinices of Plautus. Captain Thraso, who has fought—or who says he has fought—under Seleucus in the East, and his toady Gnatho, are the most amusing characters in the play. The plot is more simple and well-defined than is usual in these comedies ; and though it must be modified a little to suit either these pages or an English stage, it will not suffer much from such treatment. This Thraso,—a rich braggart, who takes Gnatho about with him everywhere to act as a kind of echo to his sentiments and to flatter his vanity,—is one of the suitors of a lady named Thais, who prefers a young gentleman named Phædria, though she does not care to discard altogether her rich lover. Poor Phædria is in despair, when the play opens, at having been refused admittance when he called on the lady the day before, because, as he understood, “the Captain” was with her. His slave Parmeno, who is much more of a philosopher than his master, gives him the very sensible advice to keep away altogether for a little while, when, if Thais really cares for him, she will soon call

him back. It is advice which he is not very willing to follow, until Thais herself entreats him to do something of the same kind. She has particular reasons at this moment for not wishing to offend the Captain. He has just made her a very handsome present,—a slave-girl of exceeding beauty. But this is not her value in her new owner's eyes. Thais discovers that this poor girl, whom the Captain has bought in Caria, and brought home with him, was a child whom her mother had brought up, and who had been to herself as a younger sister. The story was, however, that she had been originally stolen by pirates from the coast of Attica. Upon her mother's recent death, the brother of Thais, intent only upon gain, had sold this girl—well-educated and very beautiful—once more into slavery ; and so she had come into the hands of Thraso. Thais—who, though a heartless flirt of the worst description, still has her good points—is anxious to rescue her old companion, and, if possible, to restore her to her friends, to whom she hopes she has already found some clue. She fears that if her military lover believes her to prefer Phædria—as she assures that young gentleman she really does—he will break his promise, and not give her this girl. Phædria, who has himself just sent her a present of a pair of Ethiopian slaves, consents, under many protests : he will not call again “for two whole days :” he will go into the country : but Parmeno tells him that he fully believes he “will walk back to town in his sleep.” The impassioned words in which the lover takes his unwilling leave, begging Thais not to forget him when in the company of his rival, have always been greatly admired,

and often, consciously or unconsciously, imitated. Addison, in the ‘Spectator,’ calls them “inevitably beautiful :”—

Be, in his presence, as though absent still ;
 Still love me day and night ; still long for me ;
 Dream of me, miss me, think of me alone ;
 Hope for me, dote on me, be wholly mine,
 My very heart and life, as I am thine.

—Act i. sc. 2.

Gnatho is deputed by his magnificent friend to conduct the young slave girl to Thais’s house. On the way he is met by Parmeno : and even that unimpressible old servitor is struck by the girl’s wondrous beauty. The scene between the two officials of the rival powers is very good.

Gnatho (to himself as Parmeno comes up). I’ll have a little sport, now, with this knave.
(Aloud, making a low bow.) My excellent Parmeno, is it you ?

Your most obedient.—*How d’ye find yourself ?*

Parmeno (coolly). I hadn’t lost myself.

Gna. You never do.*
 Nothing unpleasant in this quarter—eh ?

(Pointing over his shoulder to Thais’s house.)

Par. There’s you.

Gna. That I can fancy. Nothing else ?

* This is not the literal joke in the original, but may serve to express it. Colman quotes an illustration of the same kind of humour from ‘The Merry Wives of Windsor :’—

“*Falstaff.* My honest lads, I’ll tell you what I am about.
Pistol. Two yards, or more.”

Par. What makes you ask ?

Gna. You look so glum.

Par. (sulkily). Not I.

Gna. Don't—I can't bear to see it. But this girl,
(*Whispering.*) The Captain's present,—what d'ye think
of her ?

Par. (affecting to eye her carelessly). Oh ! she's not bad.

Gna. (aside). I've hit my friend on the raw.

Par. (overhearing him). Oh no, you haven't !

Gna. But you must surely think
That Thais will be pleased with our new offering ?

Par. You've cut us out, you mean ? Well—wait a while;
Your turn to-day—it may be ours to-morrow.

Gna. For some six months, I promise you, Parmeno,
You shall have rest—no running to and fro
With notes and messages ; no sitting up
Till late at night to wait for your young master ;
Isn't that a comfort ? Don't you feel obliged to me ?

Par. Oh, vastly !

Gna. Well—I like to oblige my friends.

Par. Quite right.

Gna. But I detain you—perhaps you've business ?

Par. Oh, not at all !

Gna. Be so good then, if you please,
To introduce me here—you know the party.

Par. Oh ! such fine presents introduce themselves—
They're *your* credentials.

Gna. (as the door opens). Could I take a message ?

[*Parmeno makes no reply, and Gnatho goes in with
the slave-girl.*

Par. (shaking his fist after him).

Let me but see two days go by, my friend—
But two short days, I say—and this same door,
That opens now to your lightest finger-tap,
You may kick at all day, till you kick your legs off.

As he goes homewards, Parmeno meets the younger son of his master's family,—Chærea, an officer in the City Guard. He is in a great state of excitement, raving to himself about some young beauty whom he had seen in the street on his way from guard, and followed for some time, but has suddenly lost sight of. The family servant is in despair, for he knows the temperament of the young soldier. Phædria, the elder brother, is inflammable enough in such matters; but his is mere milk-and-water passion compared with Chærea's. It is love at first sight, in his case, with a vengeance. He confides his whole story—a very short one—to Parmeno; reminds him of all the tricks they played together when he was a boy; how he used to rob the housekeeper's room to bring his friend in the servants' hall good things for supper: and how Parmeno had promised what he would do for him when he grew up to be a man. Parmeno, with the usual inclination of his class to oblige his young master in such matters, asks him some questions about this interesting stranger: and from Chærea's description of her companions—Gnatho, and a maid-servant—and the fact of her having disappeared somewhere in this little by-street, he comes to the conclusion that she can be no other than the beautiful slave-girl whom he has just seen pass into the house of Thais. He begs Chærea to discontinue his pursuit: the object is unworthy of him. But when the young officer learns that Parmeno knows who she is, and where she is to be found, he becomes still more eager in his quest. At last Parmeno suggests a possible mode of introduction—if Chærea likes to black his face, and change clothes with the Ethiopian whom his

brother is going to send as a present to Thais, he, Parmeno, who has instructions to convey the pair to her house on this very day, will venture to introduce Chærea in this disguise. He makes the proposal, as he declares, more in jest than earnest: but the young man, as may be supposed, catches at it eagerly, and insists upon it being carried at once into execution.

The next act of the play opens with a highly amusing scene between the Captain and his obsequious friend. Thraso wishes to know how the lady has received his present.

Thraso. I say—was Thais very much obliged?

Gnatho. Immensely.

Thr. She was really pleased, you think ?

Gna. Not with the gift so much as that you gave it ;
'Tis that she's proud of.

Thr. I've a happy way—
I don't know how—but everything I do
Is well received.

Gna. I've noticed it myself.

Thr. Yes. Even the King himself, after an action,
Would always thank me in person. 'Twas a thing
He never did to others.

Gna. Well, with gifts like yours,
A man gets double credit, while poor souls
Like us work hard, with nobody to thank us.

Thr. Egad, you have it !
Gra. Ah ! no doubt his Majesty
Had his eye on you, always.

Thr. Well,—he had.
I may tell you—I was in all his secrets—
Had the whole army under me, in fact.

Gna. (with deep interest). No—really !

Thra. Yes. And then, when he was tired
Of seeing people, or grew sick of business,
And wanted to unbend him, as it were,—
You understand ?

Gra. I know—something, you mean,
In what we call the free-and-easy line ?

Thra. Just so—he'd ask me to a quiet dinner.
Gna. Indeed! his Majesty showed fine discernment.
Thra. That's just the man he is—one in a thousand—
There are few like him.

Gna. (aside). Very few, I fancy,
If he could stand *your* company.*

Thraso goes on to relate to his friend some of the excellent jokes which he made during the time he enjoyed this intimacy with royalty ; jokes at which the parasite (who was paid for it in good dinners) laughs more perhaps than the reader would. Here is a specimen.

Thraso. Did I ever tell you
How I touched up the Rhodian once at dinner ?

Gna. Never ! pray tell me—*(aside)* for the hundredth
time.

Thra. This youth was dining with us ; as it chanced,

* A fragment preserved by Athenaeus from a lost comedy of Menander—‘The Flatterer’—from which this play is partly taken, has the following passage. [Bias is the original of Thraso, and Strouthias is his “flatterer.”]

Bias. I have drunk off, in Cappadocia, Strouthias,
A golden goblet that held full ten quarts—
And three times filled.

Strouthias. Why, sir, you must have drunk
More than the great King Alexander could !

Bias. Well—perhaps not less—by Pallas, no !

Str. Prodigious !

There was a lady there, a friend of mine ;
 He made some joke about it ; "What," said I—
 "What, you young puppy, have you learnt to bark?"

Gna. (*laughing*). Ha, ha,—ho, ho ! O dear !

Thra. You seem amused.

Gna. (*roaring still louder*). Oh ! good indeed ! delicious !
 excellent !

Nothing can beat it!—Tell me now, though, really—
 Was that your own ? I thought it had been older ?

Thra. (*somewhat disconcerted*). What?—had you heard
 it ?

Gna. Often ; why, it's reckoned
 The best thing out.

Thra. (*complacently*). It's mine.

—Act iii. sc. 1.

The new Ethiopian slave, Phædria's gift, is introduced by Parmeno, and even Thraso, who is present, is obliged to confess that, black man as he is, he is a very good-looking young fellow. Parmeno assures them that his person is his least recommendation ; let them test his accomplishments in literature, in music, in fencing—they will find them such as will make him a most valuable addition to a lady's retinue.* And Parmeno hopes that Thais will show a little kindness to his young master in return for his well-chosen present ; which, however, in the Captain's presence, she will by no means profess herself inclined to do.

But this new servitor soon causes a terrible scandal in

* " *Viola.* I'll serve this duke ;
 Thou shalt present me as an eunuch to him :
 It may be worth thy pains ; for I can sing,
 And speak to him in many sorts of music."

—Twelfth Night, act i. sc. 2.

the household. Before morning it is discovered that the fair slave whom Thraso had so recently presented to Thais has eloped with the Ethiopian. The virtuous indignation of every waiting-gentlewoman in the establishment is roused by such an outrageous breach of all the proprieties, and they rush on the stage with voluble outcries—"Eloped! and with a black man!" A friend of Chærea's has been considerably astonished at meeting him hurrying along the street in a strange costume and with his face blacked; but the young man makes him his confidant, and obtains from him a change of clothes. Phædria,—who, as his slave Parmeno had foretold, has found it impossible to remain even two days in the country away from the object of his affections, and who has returned to the city and is lingering about Thais's door,—hears the story, and goes off to his own house to see if anything has been heard there of the fugitives. He finds the real Ethiopian hidden there in Chærea's clothes, and hauls him off, under a shower of blows, to be cross-examined by Thais and her domestics. But they all agree that this is not at all like *their* Ethiopian, who was a much better-looking fellow: and Phædria extracts at last from the terrified man that this is some trick, which promises to have serious consequences, of his madcap brother's.

The Captain meanwhile has quarrelled with Thais, believing that after all she prefers Phædria to himself; and not altogether satisfied with the private interviews which she has lately been holding with a young gentleman from the country—a somewhat rustic sort of personage, but whom Thais seems for some reason to treat

with very marked attention. As niggardly as he is jealous, Thraso comes to demand back again from his lady-love the expensive present he has made to her,—this young slave, whom it is not agreeable or convenient, for more reasons than one, for Thais to give up. She flatly refuses ; and Thraso determines to take her from the house by force. The “young man from the country,” who is at this moment paying a visit to Thais, is really the brother of this girl, who has been stolen in her infancy ; and Thais now calls upon him to stand by her in defence of his sister. He would much prefer to go and fetch the police ; but there is little time for that, for Thraso is seen approaching with a party of followers, and Thais, who with all her faults has plenty of spirit, barricades her door and defies him.

The scene must have been sufficiently effective, especially if artistically arranged, upon so wide a stage, when the gallant Captain leads his forces to the attack.

Enter THRASO, with his sword drawn, at the head of a motley retinue of hangers-on and household slaves.

Thra. You, Donax, with the crow-bar, lead the centre ;
Simalio, you command on the left wing ;
Syriscus, you the right. Bring up the reserve !
Where's our lieutenant, Sanga, and his rascals ?
They can steal anything—from a loaf to a woman.

Sanga. Here, Captain, here am I !

Thra. Why, zounds ! you dolt,
Have you come out to battle with a dish-clout ?

San. Brave sir, I knew the mettle of my Captain—
I knew his gallant men ; this fight, quoth I,
May not be without blood—I'll stanch the wounds.

Thra. (looking round doubtfully on his troops).
Where are the rest of ye ?

San. Rest ? we're all here—
We've only left the scullion to keep house.
Thra. (*to Gnatho*). Form them in line ; my post is in
the rear ;
Thence will I give command, and rule the fight.
Gna. (*half-aside to the others*). Most admirable tactics !
we to the front ;
He takes the rear-guard—to secure retreat.
Thra. It was the plan great Pyrrhus always practised.
—Act iv. sc. 7.

Thais soon discovers, as she says, that the champion whom she has called in as her protector has more need of a protector himself—for he is a fair match for Thraso in cowardice. However, he plucks up spirit enough to threaten that gallant officer, from the safe vantage of an upper window, with all the terrors of Athenian law, if he ventures to lay a hand upon his sister Pamphila—a free-born woman of Athens, as he openly asserts her to be ; and since Thraso, somewhat daunted by this double peril, confines his hostile operations to a battle of words, the lady and her party very naturally get the best of it. By the advice of Gnatho—who has also more appetite for dinners than for fighting—the Captain determines to await the surrender of his enemy, which Gnatho assures him will follow next day, and withdraws his army ; reminding his lieutenant, the cook, that for him, as for all good soldiers, as there is a time to fight, so also

“There is a time to think of hearth and home ;”
a sentiment which Sanga fully reciprocates—
“My heart has been in the stew-pan long ago ;”

and which, appealing to their business and their bosoms, the whole body cheer vociferously as they move off.

There is not much worth notice in the comedy after this scene. If this girl Pamphila, whom Chærea has carried off, is really an Athenian citizen, as she is soon proved to be, there is no difficulty as to his marrying her, and he does so with his father's full consent. Indeed we are allowed to suppose that the quiet old gentleman, as well as the trusty Parmeno, must have been glad to see such a scapegrace respectably settled in any way. Phaedria and the Captain are left rivals for the good graces of Thais as before, but Gnatho contrives to patch up the quarrel between them for the present ; doing this good office, as he assures them, from the most unimpeachable motives—his own personal interest, inasmuch as he hopes to get many a dinner from both of them.

This is said to have been the most popular of all the author's productions ; he received for it from the Ædiles (who had to provide the dramatic entertainments for the people) something like sixty pounds. Not a large sum, but more, it is said, than had been paid for any comedy before. It must be remembered that the ancient theatres were open only at festivals, for a few days at a time, and therefore no piece could have a long "run," as on the modern stage.*

* Upon this comedy were founded 'Le Muet' of Brueys, 'L'Eunuche' of Fontaine, and Sir Charles Sedley's 'Bellamira.' It has furnished Shakspeare with a quotation which he puts into the mouth of Tranio, in the 'Taming of the Shrew,' act i. sc. 1,— "Redime te captum quam queas minimo." Johnson, however, thinks that he went no farther for it than Lilly's Grammar.

V.—*PHORMIO.*

The play called ‘Phormio’ is taken also from a Greek original, not, however, by Menander, but by Apollodorus, a prolific writer of the same school. Here the principal character is the parasite—Phormio ; a fellow with an enormous appetite, consummate impudence, a keen eye to his own interest, and a not over-scrupulous conscience, but by no means a bad heart. He and the slave Geta have between them all the brains which carry on the plot ; for these gilded youth of Athens, who are the lovers in these comedies, are not, it will be observed, more largely furnished in this particular than their modern successors, and the fathers are commonly the easy prey of the adroit and unscrupulous slave who—from pure love of mischief, it would seem, and often at the risk of his skin—assists the young heir in his attack upon the paternal purse. The respectable victims in this play are two brothers—Chremes and Demipho—who have both gone abroad on business, and left their sons under the guardianship of Geta, the confidential slave of the younger brother. Their confidence is not very well repaid. The youths give the old man so much trouble, that he soon grows tired of asserting an authority which in his position he has no means of enforcing ; in fact, as he complains in the opening scene, his wards lay the whip about his back whenever he interferes. He finds it more to his interest to humour them in everything to the top of their bent. And it has come to this ; that Phaedria, the son of Chremes, has taken a fancy to a little music-girl whom he insists on

ransoming from her rascally master, who of course raises his price to an exorbitant figure as soon as he finds out the young gentleman's infatuation. Antipho, his cousin, had for a long time given promise of great steadiness : but these still waters run deep, and he plunges all at once into a romantic passion for a beautiful Cinderella, whom he discovers with bare feet and in a shabby dress, mourning over a dead mother who has left her a portionless orphan. And, finding that she is of free birth, he actually marries her. His acquaintance Phormio—whose friendship is at any young man's service who can give a good dinner—has suggested to him a plan by which he may in some degree escape his father's anger at this very imprudent match. There is a law at Athens which, like the old Levitical law, obliges the next of kin who is available to marry an orphan of the family. Phormio undertakes to appear before the proper court on behalf of the girl, and to bring evidence that Antipho is her nearest unmarried male relative : and, since the young lover of course makes no attempt to disprove it, the court gives judgment that he is to make her his wife, which he does forthwith.

All this has taken place before the action of the piece begins. And now a letter has arrived from Demipho to say that he is coming home, and both the son and Geta are in great alarm as to how he will take the news which awaits him. Antipho, like others who have married in haste, is beginning to feel something very like repentance at leisure ; he feels, he says, in the position of the man in the proverb who has “got a wolf by the ears—he can neither hold her nor let

her go." Geta is conscious that he has no very satisfactory account to render of his stewardship, and has prophetic visions of the stocks and the mill-prison. The son has made up his mind, by Geta's advice, to meet his father with something very much like bluster ; but the moment the old gentleman makes his actual appearance, his courage evaporates, and he makes off, leaving his cousin Phaedria, with Geta's assistance, to make such apologies on his behalf as they can.

The father's indignation, though it does not spare either Geta or Antipho, is chiefly directed against the parasite Phormio,—this disreputable Mentor of youth, who has trumped up such an imposture. But Phormio is equal to the occasion ; indeed, his nature is rather to rejoice in these kind of encounters with his angry dupes, in which he feels confident his natural audacity and shrewdness will carry him through. "It is a tough morsel," he says—drawing his metaphor from his familiar sphere of the dinner-table—"but I'll make a shift to bolt it." Geta, who regards him with a kind of respectful envy, as a knave of higher mark than himself, wonders how, considering all the more than doubtful transactions he has been engaged in, he has hitherto escaped the meshes of the law.

Phormio. Because, my friend, no fowler spreads his net
For hawk or kite, or such-like birds of prey ;
'Tis for the innocent flock, who do no harm ;
They are fat morsels, full of juice and flavour,
Well worth the catching. Men who've aught to lose,
Such are in danger from the law ; for me—
They know I've nothing. "Nay, but then," you'll say,
"They'll clap you up in jail." Oh ! will they ? Ah !

(*Laughing and patting himself.*) They'd have to keep me
—and they know my appetite.*

No—they're too wise, and not so self-denying,
As to return me so much good for evil.

The father has taken the precaution to provide himself with no less than three lawyers to back him in his interview with Phormio. It must be remembered that all interviews, even of the most private character, according to the conventionalities of the classic stage, take place in the public street. Should this seem to shock our notions of the fitness of things, we have only to remember the absurd anomalies of our own attempts at realistic scenery,—where the romantic forest which forms the “set” at the back has a boarded floor and a row of footlights in the front. Phormio and Geta see their adversaries coming round the corner of the street, and at once engage in a spirited controversy between themselves, purposely intended for the other party to overhear. Phormio professes to be shocked at the want of common honesty on the part of his friend's father. What! will he really repudiate the connection? disown his excellent relative Stilpho (which is the name of the pretty Phaniuni's father), merely because he died poor? Well! what will not avarice lead to! Geta, like a faithful servant, defends the character of his absent master: and the pair appear to be coming to actual blows on the question, when Demipho steps forward and interrupts them. Phormio meets the old gentle-

* The creditor, both at Athens and at Rome, though he had the right to imprison a debtor who failed to pay, was bound to maintain him while in confinement.

man's remonstrances with perfect coolness. It is no use to tell *him*, that a man does not remember his first cousin ; Demipho has evidently a convenient memory. If poor old Stilpho had left a large fortune behind him, he would have routed out the whole family pedigree. If he is not satisfied with the award of the court, he can appeal, and have the cause tried over again. But law, he must remember, is an expensive luxury ; his own advice would be, that Demipho should try to make himself comfortable with his new daughter-in-law—who is really a very nice young person. If he turns her out of his house, he, Phormio, as her father's friend, will feel it to be his duty to bring an action against him. And so he wishes him a very good-morning.

When Demipho turns to his legal friends for advice, he scarcely finds wisdom in the multitude of counsellors. For these counsellors by no means agree. The first delivers it as his opinion that what the son did in such a matter, in the absence of the head of the family, is void in law. The second holds that the judgment of the court cannot now be overruled, and that it would not be for Demipho's credit to attempt it. The third, the oldest, and as cautious as the most doubting of English Lord Chancellors, wishes to take time to consider. So the client dismisses them, each with their fee, declaring that their valuable advice has left him more bewildered than ever.*

* This scene, with the three lawyers seems to have given Molière the hint for several scenes in which he has introduced legal consultations,—*e. g.*, in ‘Le Mariage Forcé,’ sc. ix., where he makes Sganarelle say, “L'on est aussi savant à la

Young Phædria adds to Geta's troubles by coming to beg him to extract from his uncle Demipho, by some contrivance or other, the sum needful for the purchase of his dear music-girl from her master—only a poor hundred guineas. “She's a very dear bargain,” remarks the old servitor. Phædria insists, of course, that she is cheap at any price ; and Geta promises to do his best to get the money.

The return of Phædria's father—Chremes, the elder of the two brothers—from the island of Lemnos, threatens to complicate matters : but it turns out that he brings with him the key to at least the great difficulty. He has been to the island on some private business, the nature of which is known to his brother Demipho, but which is kept a strict secret from his wife Nausistrata, of whom he stands in considerable awe. The secret is partly disclosed in the scene between the two brothers on his return. Chremes had contracted, in his younger and more imprudent days, while visiting Lemnos, a private marriage (under another name) with a person in that island, the issue of which was a daughter. He had broken off this connection for some years ; but the object of this last voyage had been to make some inquiries about this duplicate family. He has formed a plan, with his brother's approval, to marry this unacknowledged daughter, now grown up to womanhood, to her cousin Antipho ; and is therefore as anxious as his brother to get this present unfortunate marriage, which they both look upon as contracted under false pretences, fin qu'au commencement ;” and in ‘M. de Pourceaugnac, act ii. sc. 13, where the “Deux Avocats” chant their opinions.

annulled if possible. So when Phormio comes and offers to take the young lady off everybody's hands and marry her himself, if Demipho will give her a dowry of a hundred guineas, Chremes persuades his brother to close with the offer, and even advances great part of the sum : which Phormio hands over to his young friend Phaedria for the ransom of his mistress.

Chremes has learned that, while he was on his voyage to Lemnos, his deserted wife has meanwhile come over to Athens in search of him, and brought the daughter with her. He is soon further enlightened upon this subject. As he is crossing the street from his own house to his brother's, he sees a woman coming from it. It is Sophrona, the old nurse of this foreign girl whom his nephew has married, and who is now stowed away somewhere in her unwilling father-in-law's house. The nurse has been there to try to discover what turn affairs are likely to take, now that the old gentleman has come home.

Chremes (looking at her stealthily). Eh ! bless me !

Yes—or do my eyes deceive me ?

Yes—this is certainly my daughter's nurse !

Sophrona (to herself, not seeing Chremes). And then,
to think the father can't be found !

Chr. What shall I do ? Shall I speak first, or wait
Till I hear more ?

Soph. Oh ! if we could but find him,
All might go well !

Chr. (coming forward). 'Tis she, no doubt ; I'll
speak.

Soph. (hearing his voice). Who's that ? I heard a voice
there !

Chr.

Sophrona !

Soph. He knows my name !

Chr.

Look at me, Sophrona.

Soph. (*looking close at him*). Oh ! gracious heavens !

What ! are you Stilpho ?

Chr. (*making signs to her to be silent*). No.

Soph. Can you deny it ?

Chr.

Hush-sh ! come further off !—

A little further from the door, good Sophrona—

And never call me by that name again !

Soph. Why, by that name we always knew you !

Chr. (*pointing to the door opposite*). —Sh !

Soph. What makes you afraid of that door ?

Chr. (*coming near her, in a half-whisper*). Why, because It's got my wife inside—an awful woman !

That's why I took another name, you see.

For fear lest you might blab my real one,

And she (*pointing to the door*) should hear it.

Soph. 'Twas no wonder, then,
We could hear nothing of you here in Athens.

—Act v. sc. 1.

He learns from the old nurse that his Lemnian wife is dead, and that his daughter is just married to his nephew Antipho. In the bewilderment of the moment he fails to identify the fair subject of the lawsuit with his own daughter : and perhaps only those who have seen this play acted by Westminster scholars can appreciate the comic earnestness with which the uncle, with his own double relations strong in his mind, and fancying that his young nephew is in the same predicament, asks of Sophrona—

“ What—has *he* two wives ? ”

When he finds out that the two wives are one and the

same, and that his Lemnian daughter is really married, by a happy accident, to the very husband he had designed for her, he blesses the gods for his good fortune, and it is plain that all Antipho's difficulties are over.

But Chremes, unluckily, joins his brother in an attempt to recover from Phormio the gold pieces which he has got from them under pretence of dowry. They don't want him to marry Phanium now, of course; and they see no reason for his not returning the money. But Phormio, with his usual cleverness, has made himself master of the whole story. He declares *his* willingness to complete at once *his* part of the bargain, and protests, with considerable show of justice, that he will not be cheated out of wife and dowry too. He threatens Chremes that unless he holds his tongue about the money, he will tell his wife Nausistrata all about that little establishment at Lemnos. This impudence is more than Demipho can stand, and he calls his slaves to carry off the parasite to jail. The noise he makes brings in Nausistrata, and though both the brothers try to stop his mouth, he carries his threat into execution. Nausistrata, of course, is in a considerable fury at first: but as her rival is dead, and this unnecessary daughter safely disposed of, she is satisfied with the rod which Phormio has put into her hands to be wielded over her husband in any future connubial disagreement; and, partly out of gratitude for this acquisition of power, and partly to annoy her husband, invites him at once to supper. The parasite foresees that there will always be a knife and fork ready for him at her table as well as at Phanium's.

VI.—THE BROTHERS.

This comedy, like ‘Phormio,’ has always been a favourite with the Westminster actors. It is taken partly from a play of Menander, and partly from one by another Greek dramatist, Diphilus. It was acted lately at Westminster with great success, and it may be permissible to borrow, as a familiar rendering of the early portion of the story, a few verses from the clever sketch of the “Plot” which was handed round on that occasion for the enlightenment of the less classical among the audience :—

“ Two brothers once in Athens dwelt of old,
Though widely did their dispositions differ ;
One loved the country, was a churl and scold,
The other bland and gentle as a zephyr.

Demea, the churl, had once a wife, since dead,
And, as it seems, he did not much regret her ;
Micio, the bland, had not been so *miss-led*,
And never took a wife, for worse or better.

Now Denica had two sons ; but he did predicate
That one was quite enough ; and gave the other—
The elder of the two—to rear and educate,
In short, to be adopted, by his brother.

The youngest, Ctesipho, at home was taught,
Was duly lectured, disciplined, and scolded ;
Rose early—read—walked—and, as Demea thought,
Into a rural innocent was moulded.

But Micio loved the city, and, forsooth !
Ne'er thought of looking after his adopted ;
But if he told the truth, and all the truth,
Whatever prank was played, he never stopped it."

Demea has protested from time to time against his brother's very lax system of discipline ; and when he finds that young *Æschinus*'s not very steady course has just culminated in a tremendous and notorious row—that he has broken open the house of a slave-dealer, beaten the master, and carried off a young woman—he lectures his brother severely on the results of his ill-judged indulgence.

But Ctesipho, who has been kept in stricter leading-strings by the father, is not quite the pattern youth that the old gentleman thinks him. He is really the person most concerned in the brawl which caused so much scandal ; for the girl who has been thus forcibly carried off from her owner is a young music-girl with whom he has fallen in love—who claims, however, as usual, to be free-born and entitled to all the rights of citizenship. *Æschinus*, not standing so much in fear of his good-natured guardian as the other does of his father, and having, besides, no great reputation to lose, is content to take upon himself all the blame of the late burglary and abduction ; though Ctesipho has been really the principal in the affair, in which his brother has only aided and abetted out of pure fraternal affection. There is the usual intriguing slave, Syrus, who is of course in the secret ; and who persuades the father that Ctesipho is gone down to the country grange, whither Demea follows him, quite persuaded that he shall find his exemplary son

deep in farming operations. He is, in fact, at this moment taking care of his prize in Æschinus's apartments in his uncle's house, whither she has been conducted.

Syrus, delighted to have such an opportunity of exercising his wit upon Demea, whose principles of education he altogether dislikes, compliments him highly upon his son Ctesipho's irreproachable conduct. He declares that the good youth has been quite shocked at his elder brother's iniquity, and has reproached him with the discredit he was bringing on the family.

Syrus. Æschinus, quoth he, I am ashamed of you—
You waste not money only, but your life.

Demea. Heaven bless him ! he'll be worthy of his fore-fathers.

Syr. I'm sure he will.

Dem. Syrus, he's had good teaching.

Syr. Ah ! he had those at home who understood it.

Dem. I do take pains ; I omit no single item :
I train him well ; in fact, I bid him study,
As in a mirror, all the characters
He sees around him, and draw from them lessons
For his own guidance : copy this, I say—

Syr. Ah ! capital !

Dem. This, again, avoid—

Syr. Just so.

Dem. This act, I say, is praiseworthy—

Syr. Quite right.

Dem. That was a fault—

Syr. I see.

Dem. And then, besides—

Syr. I beg your pardon—I could listen all day—
But I'm so busy : there's some splendid fish—
I must not let them spoil : for this, you see,
In my vocation, sir, would be a sin,

Just as, with gentlefolks, neglect of morals :
 Indeed, in my poor sphere, I train my knaves
 Exactly on your worship's principle. Look here,
 I say, that dish 's too salt ; this roast is burned—
 That's not washed clean ; that fricassee is good—
 Just the right thing—be sure the next is like it.
 The best advice that my poor wit affords
 I strive to give (*looking gravely at Demea, and copying his manner*). In short, I bid them study
 As in a mirror, every dish I make,
 Thus to draw lessons for their own instruction.
 'Tis but a humble school, I feel, I train them in ;
 But we must do our best—man can't do more.—
 (*Bowing demurely*). Can I oblige you, sir, in any way ?
Dem. (*angrily*). Yes—mend your manners.*

—Act iii. sc. 3.

The elder of the young men has in truth perplexities enough of his own to have justified him, if he had been less good-natured, in declining to involve himself in those of his brother. He has an unacknowledged wife, and just at this time the not very welcome addition of a baby. The news of his having been engaged in this brawl, and having carried off the singing-girl to his uncle's house, soon reaches the ears of Sostrata, his very respectable mother-in-law : who comes to the natural conclusion that Æschinus is faithless to his poor wife at this interesting crisis, and intends to repudiate her altogether, instead of presenting her to his uncle, as he had promised, and obtaining his sanction to their public union. By the advice of Geta, an old and trusty servant, who has remained with them in their reduced fortunes (for there are faithful slaves,

* Horace had probably this dialogue in his mind, Sat. I. iv. 103.

in these comedies, as well as the more common type of dishonest ones), they lay the case before an old friend of the family, the excellent Hegio, who undertakes to represent to Micio the great wrong which is being done by his ward to his unfortunate young relative. On his way to Micio's house he falls in with Demea, who is an old acquaintance, and informs him of this new enormity on the part of young Æschinus, at which the father can only lift up his hands and eyes, and lament over this still more convincing proof of the sad results of such a training as the youth has had from his uncle.

But on his way to his country-house he meets a workman who tells him that his own dear Ctesiphon has not been seen there since he left. So he goes back to make inquiry about him at his brother's,—inquiry which, under present circumstances, is somewhat awkward to meet. Yes,—he has been there, Syrus tells him, and points to his own bandaged head as evidence. The good youth was so indignant at his brother's conduct that he took him to task roundly, and ended by beating the music-wench, and breaking poor Syrus's head. “He ought to be ashamed of himself,” says the latter whimpering,—“a poor old man like me, that nursed him!”—“Not at all,” replies the unsympathetic Demea; “’tis you ought to be ashamed of yourself—you nursed his brother in wickedness!” He next inquires of the slave where his brother Micio is; for he wants to expostulate with him about this unfortunate business. He is not at home, Syrus assures him; but he will give him full directions where to find him. He must go through the portico behind the shambles,

down the next street, then to the right, then up the next, then to the left, past the chapel, through the narrow lane where the wild fig-tree stands, straight on to Diana's temple, then to the right; then he will see a mill, with a joiner's shop opposite, where his brother is gone to order an oak table: and with these very particular directions, which will give the old gentleman a good long afternoon's walk through the suburbs, he gets rid of him for the present. The two young men are in the house all the time, having a little dinner in celebration of the successful rescue of Ctesiphon's fair friend; and Syrus, having got rid, for some hours at least, of this inconvenient visitor, will take the opportunity of this festive occasion to get royally drunk.

Æschinus soon learns the misconstruction which has been put upon his conduct; for when he next goes to his lodgings to visit his young wife, he is refused admittance. Neither she nor her mother will have anything more to do with such a villain. But in the crisis of his distress he is encountered by his good-natured guardian, to whom Hegio has told the whole story, and who has gone at once to see for himself what kind of people these new connections are: and he—after playing for a little while with the young man's anxiety—throws him at last into ecstasies of joy and gratitude by magnanimously promising to recognise his wife, and desiring him to bring her home to his house as soon as he thinks proper.

Demea returns from his long walk in search of his brother, very hot and very angry. He has not been able to find the "joiner's shop," and half suspects

that Syrus has been fooling him : for he meets Micio just coming out of his own house. He attacks him with the story of this new escapade of his precious ward Æschinus ; but his brother listens with a composure which is exceedingly irritating.

Demea. He's got a wife !

Micio. Well—better he than I.

Dem. She's got a baby !

Mic. Doing well, I hope ?

Dem. The jade's an absolute beggar !

Mic. So I hear.

Dem. You mean you'll take her in without a sixpence ?

Mic. I do.

Dem. What's to become of them ?

Mic. Of course

They must come here.

Dem. (ironically). Why, you seem quite delighted !

Mic. No—not if I could alter it. Look ye, brother,
Man's life is as it were a game of tables ;
If that the throw we want will not turn up,
Skill must correct such luck as fortune gives us.

—Act iv. sc. 7.

It is the better side of the Epicurean philosophy, put into few and terse words ; and we shall probably not be wrong in assuming the lines to be pretty closely translated from Menander, who may not improbably have had the idea from Epicurus himself.

Another precious example of his brother's domestic discipline meets Demea as he comes away from this unsatisfactory interview. It is Syrus, so drunk as to have lost even the semblance of respectful demeanour.

Syr. (staggering up against *Demea*). Oho ! you're back again, are you, Mr Wisdom ?

Dem. (*pushing him away*). If you were my slave,
sirrah—

Syr. You'd be lucky—

You'd have a (*hiccup*) treasure—save you half your income.

Dem. (*shaking his stick at him*). I'd make an example
of ye !

(Enter Dromo, another slave, running from the house.)

Dro. Hallo—Syrus !

Ctesipho wants ye !

Syr. (*aside to him*). Hush-sh ! away, you fool !

Dem. Ctesipho '—here ?

Syr. N-no, n-no, sir !—it's not him,

It's—it's—another young man—a little parasite—

Of the same name.—You know him, don't you, sir ?

Dem. I very soon will, at any rate (*making for the house*).

Syr. (*trying to hold him back*). Stop, sir, stop !

But the father has heard enough to open his eyes. He rushes in, spite of Syrus's drunken efforts to stop him, and makes at last full discovery of how he has been deceived. Micio succeeds in soothing him in some degree, by assuring him that his own fortune is ample enough to supply both the young men's wants ; that he will give a dowry also to Ctesipho with his beloved, and see him married respectably.

The failure of his own system, and the placid triumph of his easy brother, work an odd transformation in Demea's behaviour. He meets this "irony of events" by a curious irony of his own. Since easy temper is the mode, he will at once adopt it. He begins by shaking hands with Syrus, and thanking him for his admirable conduct—he will certainly do something for him. Then he meets Geta, and shakes

hands with him (who certainly deserves it better) ; he will do something for him too. He persuades his brother to give Syrus his freedom, with a sum of money to set him up in life, "by way of encouragement to honest servants," as he ironically puts it. He will have him make a deed of gift of a snug farm to Hegio, who has acted the part of a good relation so manfully ; and he ends by persuading the old bachelor himself to marry the excellent Sostrata, his ward's mother-in-law—a lone woman, much in want of a protector. The good-natured Micio does make some wry faces at this last item in the arrangements, but his brother's arguments as to the great duty of pleasing everybody are too strong for him. If complaisance with other people's fancies, and reckless liberality, are the right thing, Demea is determined to give his brother full opportunity to put in practice this new-fangled virtue.

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